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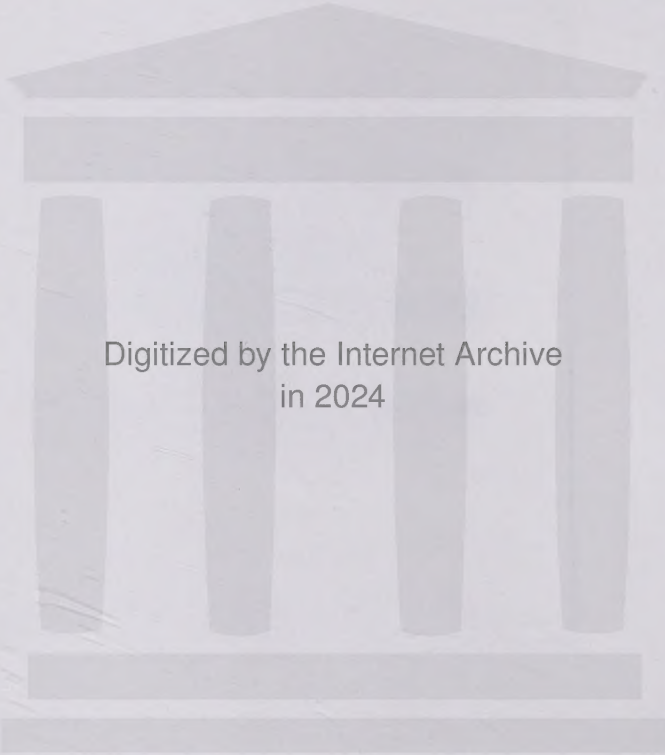
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# OUR LORD'S EARTHLY LIFE

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DAVID SMITH, M.A., D.D.

*Books by the Same Author*

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The Art of Preaching

The Life and Letters of St. Paul

The Days of His Flesh

The Unwritten Sayings of Our Lord



# OUR LORD'S EARTHLY LIFE

BY

DAVID SMITH, M.A., D.D.

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IN THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE, BELFAST

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OUR LORD'S  
EARTHLY LIFE

DAVID WHITE

THE LIFE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST  
AS TOLD BY THE GOSPEL WRITERS

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OUR LORD'S EARTHLY LIFE

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## *Preface*

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It is just twenty years since the appearance of *The Days of His Flesh*, my first book, written with much misgiving, at the request of the late Sir William Robertson Nicoll, while I was minister in a remote Scottish parish; and the favour which greeted it and has attended it all these years has taught me not only how graciously our Lord owns a feeble service rendered in faith and love but how eagerly the human heart everywhere longs for a larger knowledge and a deeper understanding of Him. During those years, so eventful for humanity and so fraught in my own experience with loving-kindness and tender mercy, my esteem of the Holy Scriptures and my reverence for Him of whom they testify have both increased; and it has long been in my heart to tell the immortal story afresh after a simpler fashion, eschewing the distraction of critical discussion and referring to my earlier work for the justification of my handling of the evangelic narratives and my arrangement of the precious material which they furnish.

This book is the realisation of my purpose. It is an attempt, by one who for upwards of thirty years

has been continually employed in study of the sacred records and the relevant literature, ancient and modern, and who has moreover enjoyed a peculiar opportunity of acquainting himself with the thoughts and needs of his generation, to exhibit our Blessed Lord and Saviour as He dwelt here long ago and follow His progress from Bethlehem to Olivet. Poor though it be, it is a grateful tribute—the best that I can bring—to the Love which has blessed my life and made my heart glad ; and as I now lay it humbly and reverently at His feet, may He pardon its manifold imperfection and deign to use it for His glory and the confirmation of my readers in His faith and peace and hope !

D. S.

COLLEGE PARK, BELFAST.



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## *Chronology*

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It was Dionysius Exiguus, the abbot of a Roman monastery in the sixth century, who established in Western Christendom the fashion of reckoning history no longer as of old from the foundation of the city of Rome (*ab urbe condita*) in 753 B.C. but from the birth of our Lord. Unfortunately in fixing December 25 of our year 1 as the date of that supreme event he erred regarding both the year and the day.

I. *The Year*.—On the testimony of St. Matthew, when our Lord was born at Bethlehem, Herod the Great was still reigning over Judæa; and since Herod died on April 1, 4 B.C., it follows Mt. ii. 1. that His birth was prior to that date. According to St. Luke He was born while the first imperial Lk. ii. 1, 2 census, instituted by Augustus, was in pro- R.V.gress, and from Egyptian census-papers of various dates recently unearthed at Oxyrhynchus<sup>1</sup> it appears that the census was taken every fourteen years, and the first fell in 8 B.C. Hence it would follow that this was the year of our Lord's birth; but here a difficulty emerges inasmuch as St. Luke expressly states that when that first imperial census was taken, Publius Sulpicius Quirinius was governor of the Province of Syria; and since it was in 6 A.D. that Quirinius

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Grenfell and Hunt's discussion in *Oxyrh. Pap.* II. pp. 207 ff.

assumed the governorship of Syria,<sup>1</sup> it was not during the first imperial census that our Lord was born but during the second. The explanation is furnished by a mutilated inscription which was discovered at Tivoli in 1764 and which records that Quirinius' Syrian governorship of 6 A.D. was his second tenure of that office and that the special task for which he was then appointed was the reduction of the kingdom of Judæa to provincial status on the deposition of Archelaus.<sup>2</sup> It was during his previous governorship that the first census was taken.

But here a fresh difficulty emerges, inasmuch as the first census fell in 8 B.C. and in that year not Quirinius, as St. Luke affirms, but C. Sentius Saturninus was governor of Syria. It appears, however, that Quirinius' first Syrian governorship was a military command, and he held it as *legatus Augusti pro prætore* in association with the civil governor. This was no unusual arrangement in view of military exigencies; and the task which required the service of Quirinius was the suppression of the fierce tribe of the Homadenses on the Cilician frontier. It was his success in this difficult campaign that gained him the honour of a Triumph;<sup>3</sup> and according to the Tivoli inscription it was between his Triumph and his second Syrian governorship that he held the proconsulate of Asia. There is no record of the date of his proconsulate, but since he was consul in 12 B.C. and the normal interval between consulship and proconsulate was under Augustus five or six years, evidently he was Proconsul

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Joseph. *Ant.* XVIII. ii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Schürer, *Hist. of the Jewish People*, I. i. p. 354; Ramsay, *Was Christ born at Bethlehem?*, pp. 227 ff., 273.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Tac. *Ann.* III. 48; Strabo, 569.



of Asia in the year 5-4 B.C. in succession to Asinius Gallus. The date of his military governorship of Syria might thus be the year 6-5 B.C. during the civil governorship of P. Quinctilius Varus (6-4 B.C.).

It would be in that year that the imperial census, due in the year 8, was taken; and there was a reason for its delay. Judæa was then still a kingdom, and Herod, though a vassal of Rome, retained sovereign authority within his petty dominion. It was often difficult for him to please his suzerain without offending his Jewish subjects, always so jealous of their national and religious usages, and at that juncture his relations with Augustus were sorely strained. It was in the year 7 B.C. that the latter, as Josephus records,<sup>1</sup> sent him a stern letter, threatening to regard him no longer "as a friend but as a subject," and probably the occasion of the quarrel was in part the king's reluctance to institute the census lest Ac. v. 37. it should excite an insurrection, as actually happened when the second census was taken in 6 A.D.

The evidence thus far points to 5 B.C. as the year of our Lord's birth; and it is corroborated by two evangelic testimonies. (1) St. Luke states Lk. iii. 1, that the Baptist began his prophetic ministry <sup>23.</sup> during Pontius Pilate's governorship of Judæa (25-35 A.D.) in the fifteenth year, not of the *reign*, but of the "*governorship*" of Tiberius, that is, the fifteenth year after his assumption by Augustus toward the close of 11 A.D. as his colleague "with equal authority in all the provinces and armies."<sup>2</sup> The fifteenth year of the governorship of Tiberius began toward the close of

<sup>1</sup> *Ant.* XVI. ix. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Tac. Ann.* I. 3; *Suet. Tib.* xxi.

25 A.D., and it was in that year that John began his ministry. Our Lord was baptised early in 26 A.D., soon after the beginning of John's ministry and some time before the ensuing Passover in the month of March; and since He was then "about thirty years of age," He was born in the year 5 B.C. (2) It agrees herewith that at this the first Passover in the course of His public ministry Herod's Temple had been forty-six years a-building; and since it was in the year 20 B.C. that the building was begun, that was the Passover of 26 A.D. It may be added that on the evidence of the Gospel narratives His ministry lasted three full years, and He was crucified, according to Tertullian, during the consulship of L. Rubellius Geminus and C. Fufius Geminus, that is, in 29 A.D.<sup>1</sup>

2. *The Month*.—It was certainly in the summer time that He was born, since the shepherds were out on the wilderness of Judæa with their flocks and the season for pasturing in the open extended from the Passover till October. Nor is more precise evidence lacking. Zechariah, the Baptist's father, belonged to the Course of Abijah, the eighth of the twenty-four priestly relays that ministered each in rotation for a week, reckoned from Sabbath to Sabbath; and at that period the eighth Course's "days of ministration" fell about the third week of May. It was then that Zechariah obtained the promise of a son, and Elisabeth conceived after his return home in the beginning of June. It was in the ensuing November that Mary conceived; and so it would be

<sup>1</sup> Tert. *Adv. Jud.* 8; Tac. *Ann.* V. 1.

in August that she "brought forth her first-born Son."

Hence the progress of events may be thus defined, tentatively as regards details but with reasonable certainty as regards the broad outline :—

|         |                           |              |
|---------|---------------------------|--------------|
| 5 B.C.  | Birth of John the Baptist | . March.     |
|         | Birth of our Lord . . .   | August.      |
|         | Flight to Egypt . . .     | October.     |
| 4 B.C.  | Return to Nazareth . . .  | October.     |
| 7 A.D.  | His first Passover . . .  | April 9.     |
| 26 A.D. | His Baptism . . .         | January.     |
|         | Wedding at Cana . . .     | early March. |

#### FIRST YEAR OF HIS MINISTRY

|         |                             |                                 |
|---------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
|         | Passover . . . . .          | March 21.                       |
|         | At Bethabara . . . . .      | April and early May.            |
|         | Arrest of the Baptist . . . | early in May.                   |
|         | At Sychar . . . . .         | close of May.                   |
|         | Settlement at Capernaum . . | beginning of June.              |
|         | Inland mission . . . . .    | close of June till late summer. |
| 27 A.D. | In the cornfield . . . . .  | March.                          |

#### SECOND YEAR OF HIS MINISTRY

|  |                                 |                        |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------------|
|  | Passover . . . . .              | April 9.               |
|  | Ordination of the Twelve . .    | May.                   |
|  | Mission in southern Galilee : . | May till early spring. |

Mary the Magdalene,  
visit to Nazareth,  
commission of the Twelve,  
at Nain,  
deputation from the Baptist,

|         |                            |                   |
|---------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 28 A.D. | the Baptist's execution    | . January.        |
|         | Retreat to Bethsaida       | Julias: February. |
|         | feeding the five thousand, |                   |
|         | walking on the water.      |                   |

## THIRD YEAR OF HIS MINISTRY

|                                                                                                                                                 |         |                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| (Passover                                                                                                                                       | . . . . | March 29.)                          |
| In Phœnicia                                                                                                                                     | . . . . | April-June.                         |
| In Decapolis                                                                                                                                    | . . . . | June.                               |
| Retreat to Cæsarea Philippi:                                                                                                                    | . . . . | close of June to<br>mid-August.     |
| Peter's confession,<br>first announcement of Passion,<br>the Transfiguration,<br>healing of epileptic child,<br>second announcement of Passion. |         |                                     |
| Back in Capernaum                                                                                                                               | . . . . | till near close of<br>August.       |
| Revisiting inland Galilee                                                                                                                       | . . . . | till mid Septem-<br>ber.            |
| Passage through Samaria                                                                                                                         | . . . . | September 23.                       |
| At Jericho                                                                                                                                      | . . . . | September 24.                       |
| At Bethany                                                                                                                                      | . . . . | September 25.                       |
| Arrival at Jerusalem                                                                                                                            | . . . . | September 26.                       |
| Ministry at Jerusalem                                                                                                                           | . . . . | till close of<br>December.          |
| 29 A.D. At Bethabara                                                                                                                            | . . . . | probably till close<br>of February. |
| Raising of Lazarus                                                                                                                              | . . . . | close of February.                  |
| At Ephraim                                                                                                                                      | . . . . | till April 10.                      |
| At Jericho                                                                                                                                      | . . . . | over Sabbath,<br>April 11.          |
| Supper at Bethany                                                                                                                               | . . . . | Sunday evening,<br>April 12.        |



## THE PASSION-WEEK

|                       |                                     |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Triumphal Entry . . . | Monday morning,<br>April 13.        |
| Last Supper . . .     | evening of Thurs-<br>day, April 16. |
| Crucifixion . . . .   | Friday, April 17.                   |
| Resurrection . . . .  | Sunday morning,<br>April 19.        |
| Ascension . . . . .   | Thursday, May 29.                   |



## THE HEAVENLY VISITANT

HE was the Prince of Glory  
In the land of cloudless day ;  
But His eyes were wet with dimming tears,  
And there He would not stay.  
For He had heard the story  
Of sorrow upon the earth,  
And its voice of woe was in His ears  
Amid the angels' mirth.

So down He came in pity  
And with mortals made abode ;  
And where'er He found an open door,  
He brought the peace of God.  
In hamlet, field, and city  
He vanquished disease and sin,  
And He told glad tidings to the poor,  
If they but let Him in.

And in His ancient pity  
The immortal Son of God  
Still walks on the earth and takes His stand  
Where grief hath its abode.  
In hamlet, field, and city  
There are still disease and sin ;  
And there still is healing in His hand  
For all who let Him in.



## JESU, WORD OF GOD INCARNATE

Jo. i. 1-18; Phil. ii. 5-11.

Is not this a singular title under which St. John introduces the Lord Jesus Christ at the beginning of his peerless Gospel? What does it mean?

Our Christian faith is that our Blessed Saviour, while truly human, was not a mere man. He was the Eternal Son of God who left His glory and made Himself one with us, that He might bear the burden of the world's sin and sorrow and suffering. This is the miracle of the Incarnation; and when St. John wrote his Gospel at Ephesus about the close of the first century, it was difficult for men, whether heathen or Jews, to believe it. What made it so difficult?

As regards the heathen: their philosophers all down the ages had taught them that matter is essentially and necessarily evil; and the problem thus presented to their minds was how a pure God could have to do with a material and therefore impure world in the way of creation or providence or redemption, and, above all, how the Eternal Son of God could become incarnate and wear a material body of sinful flesh. Hence it was very difficult for educated heathen like the people of Ephesus, that famous centre of learning, to accept the Gospel of the Incarnation; and in St. John's day there appeared a Christian teacher who propounded a theory which seemed to him a solution of the problem. His name was Cerinthus, and he



drew a distinction between Jesus and Christ. Jesus he regarded as a mere man, a wise teacher but only human, and Christ as an angelic being who at the Baptism of Jesus descended upon him in the likeness of a dove and kept company with him all the three years of his ministry, endowing him with supernatural wisdom and power to work miracles. Then at the close the Christ left him, and it was the human Jesus who was nailed to the Cross and suffered and died. Cerinthus meant no harm. His theory was to his mind a sincere attempt to solve a real problem; yet it was a fatal heresy, and St. John stoutly opposed it and denounced him as an enemy of the truth. And so indeed he was; for his doctrine was a denial of a real incarnation.

For the Jews the problem was hardly less acute. Their dominant conception was, in philosophic phrase, the divine transcendence. God was for them "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, Is. lvii. 15. whose name is Holy"—too high, as it seemed, for the children of men to reach Him, and too holy to endure contact with human defilement; and the problem was how the gulf between God and man could be bridged. And what was the solution of the Rabbis? There are numerous Old Testament passages which speak of "The Word of the Lord," figuratively personalising it: for example, that formula wherewith the Prophets introduce their messages, "The Word of the Lord came unto me, saying," as though it were His messenger, the bearer of His revelation. Here, thought the Rabbis, was a mediator between God and the world—His Word, a glorious angelic being, less than God and therefore capable of earthly

contact, greater than man and therefore fit to approach God. Shortly before St. John's day there arose at Alexandria a large-hearted and widely influential Jewish teacher named Philo, who thought to reconcile Jews and Gentiles by interpreting Jewish theology in terms of Greek philosophy. He elaborated the Rabbinical doctrine, conceiving "the Divine Word" as the agent in creation and revelation, and designating Him "the First-born," "the Image of God," "the High Priest," "the Archetypal Man"—a conception which approaches very near the Christian idea of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Such were the thoughts which filled the minds of men in those days; and fantastic as they appear nowadays, they expressed a profound instinct of the human soul—its yearning for access to God and fellowship with Him. St. John recognised how this yearning is met by the Incarnation, the union of God and humanity in His Eternal Son, the Archetypal Man, the Image in which man was created and to which he will eventually be conformed by redeeming grace. And so he prefaces his Gospel with this announcement: "Here is the satisfaction which your hearts are craving. Here is the Mediator, the true Word. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh, and we beheld His glory."

And thus no mortal can tell the complete story of the life of our Blessed Lord. For He was the Eternal Son of God who became flesh for us men and for our redemption, and His birth was not the beginning of His life nor was His death its end. It is indeed possible to recount His progress through the world, but

this is not the whole story. It is but a narrow segment of an infinite circle, a moment of His Eternity. His actual career knows neither beginning of days nor end of years. It sweeps in a magnificent circuit from the ageless Glory down to this low earth, the arena of His redemptive conflict, and back to the Eternal Throne, where He is throned evermore at God's right hand. All that is given us is to tell the story of His brief earthly sojourn,

“ How He walked here, the shadow of Him Love,  
The speech of Him soft Music, and His step  
A Benediction,”

continually realising in the telling of it who He was and is and wherefore He came, and reverently relying on the present aid of the Holy Spirit, His Witness and Interpreter.

## HIS EARLY YEARS



## HIS BIRTH

Mt. i. 1-17; Lk. iii. 23-38. Lk. i. 5-80; Mt. i. 18-25.

Lk. ii. 1-38; Mt. ii. 1-18.

His birth was necessarily unique. For it was not the generation of a new member of our race: it was the incarnation of an eternal life and its manifestation under human conditions.

In the town of Nazareth, nestling among the uplands of Galilee just where they slope down to the Plain of Esdraelon, Israel's battle-field of old, there dwelt a maiden named Mary, the Hebrew Miriam. Tradition has it that her parents were named Joachim ("The Lord raiseth up") and Hannah ("Grace"), and they had at least one other child, a daughter

Jo. xix.  
Salome who appears later as the wife of <sup>25</sup>; Mt.  
xxvii. 56;  
Zebedee, a fisherman by the Lake of Galilee. Mk. xv. 40.

They were godly peasant-folk, and on her attaining, it is said, the age of twelve years they betrothed her to an elderly fellow-townsmen named Joseph. Though resident at Nazareth, he was a native of Bethlehem, "the city of David"; and with a true Israelite's pride in lineage he traced his descent from the ancient royal house. Not that he was a princely personage; for the glory of the royal house had long departed, and in those days of national humiliation many a lowly Jew claimed kinship with it. Joseph was a common artisan, a carpenter to trade.

It was in the month of November in the year 6 B.C.



when Mary was startled by a heavenly intimation. Of old, when the light of revelation was yet dim, God was wont on occasion to employ two gracious modes of communicating His purposes to the children of men. One was the mystery of dreams and the other the visitation of angels. Since the name signifies "a messenger," an angel might be either an inspired prophet merely or a "ministering spirit," one of those "thousands of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand, a multitude beyond number and reckoning, who stand before the Lord of Spirits," and speed upon His errands, attending unseen upon the "heirs of salvation." It was one of these that visited Mary, none other, says St. Luke the poet Evangelist in his Hymn of the Nativity, than Gabriel, one of the "four presences," the Archangels Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, and Phanuel, whom the devout imagination of the later Jewish teachers pictured as standing about the Throne of God. His special office, they conceived, was intercession for the children of men. He was ever a gracious visitant, the messenger of mercy; and here is the felicitous thought of the Evangelist when he makes Gabriel the angel who visited Mary and acquainted her with God's marvellous purpose. Betrothed but still unwed, she would conceive by the creative power of the Holy Spirit; and the Child whom she should bear would be the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed—the Saviour whom the ancient prophets had foretold and whom Israel had so long expected and never so eagerly as in those calamitous days.

The maiden would tell the story to her parents,

Cf. Job  
xxxiii. 14-  
30.

Heb. i. 14;  
Mt. xviii.  
10.

and it troubled them. Sure though they were of the divine purpose, they foresaw how it would seem to an incredulous world. It is matter of history what the unbelieving Jews made of the story of the Virgin Birth when at length it was published. They charged Mary with infidelity, and even identified her paramour as a soldier Panthera. The good name of their daughter was in peril, and therefore Joachim and Hannah meanwhile kept the story a close secret even from Joseph and presently conveyed her away to the home of an old kinswoman Elisabeth, the wife of a priest Zechariah, who dwelt far south at a village some four miles west of Jerusalem, which still bears its ancient name of *Khirbet el-Jehud*, "City of Judah." There she sojourned for three months, and then she returned home. Her condition was now apparent, and Joseph drew the natural inference. He must repudiate her, but he refrained his indignation; and that night in a dream he was assured of the truth, and next day he acknowledged Mary as his wife and took her to his home with befitting reverence.

The Virgin Birth is indeed a mystery, but so no less is every birth. "Thou knowest not," it was written of old, "how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child." There Eccl. xi. 5. is impenetrable mystery in "ordinary generation," and were it not "ordinary," the marvel of it would be recognised. And it is because it is unique that the manner of our Lord's birth excites incredulity. Consider the occasion, and its reason will appear. What does the Apostle mean by his antithesis of the First and the Second Adam? The First Adam was the original

Rom. v.  
14-17; 1  
Cor. xv.  
21, 22,  
45-49.

head of humanity. He was created innocent, and the divine intention was that he should maintain his innocence and by steadfast obedience gather strength and wisdom; and then by the inscrutable law of heredity he would have transmitted his moral and intellectual gain to his descendants, and would thus have facilitated the progress of the race toward the realisation of its divine ideal. But he failed, and by the same law his sin was their heritage. The life of humanity was polluted at its source and gathered ever larger defilement from generation to generation. And what was the remedy? The stream, polluted at its source, must be cleansed there. The race must find a new head; and this was provided by the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God, the Archetype of Humanity, the Divine Image in which man had been created. He was the Second Adam, the new head of the race; and even as from the First Adam there flowed down the generations a poisoned stream, so from the Second there flows a stream of healing, and "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." In Him the entail of sin was broken and an entail of righteousness established.

But how was this secured by the Virgin Birth? He had indeed no human father, but had He not a human mother? and through her did He not share in the *damnosa hæreditas* of original sin? And was He not thus Himself a sinner, needing redemption? It was to meet this difficulty that Peter of Lombardy in the twelfth century devised the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, which after long debate was pronounced an article of the Romanist

faith in the year 1854. But it is a pure fiction, destitute not only of scriptural sanction but of theological value. For it does not solve the problem : it merely throws it farther back ; and surely, if a miracle of immaculate conception be necessary, it were more reasonably assumed of our Lord Himself than of His mother, since He had but a single human parent.

What then is the truth ? Observe what is written :  
 " She was found with child *of the Holy Spirit.*" " That which is begotten *in her* is *of the Holy Spirit.*" Mt. i. 18, 20.  
 The significant fact here is that in the original

" of " is the distinctive preposition of *motherhood* ; and what this implies appears when it is remembered that according to the Scriptures the operation of the Holy Spirit is the creative energy of God alike in the physical and in the spiritual domain, alike in generation and in regeneration. Even as the First Adam was a creation of the Holy Spirit, so was the humanity which clothed the Eternal Son in the days of His flesh. It was not generated : it was created ; and the womb of the Virgin was but the nidus where " the Holy Thing begotten in her " was cherished and nurtured. It was begotten, Cf. Gen. i. 2 ; Ps. civ. 30 ; Is. xxxiv. 15 ; Rom. viii. 11 ; 2 Cor. iii. 18 ; Eph. iv. 23.  
 not of her, but in her of the Holy Spirit ; and it derived from her no hereditary taint. It was a fresh creation direct from the Divine Hand. Lk. i. 35.

And thus our Lord was born sinless, as He could not have been had He been born of Mary. His humanity, even as the First Adam's, was a fresh creation ; and, even as the First Adam, He was a true man, sharing our human weakness and our human

conflict. He "was in all points tempted like as we are, apart from sin." He was the Second Adam, Heb. iv. and He renewed the conflict on the primal conditions and triumphed where the First Adam had fallen.

"O loving wisdom of our God !  
When all was sin and shame,  
A second Adam to the fight  
And to the rescue came.

"O wisest love ! that flesh and blood,  
Which did in Adam fail,  
Should strive afresh against their foe,  
Should strive and should prevail."

It was a wonderful and solemn mystery, and it is nothing strange that Joseph and Mary reverently concealed it from an ill-judging world. It was known only to themselves and their trusted intimates, and Cf. Lk. ii. as the Holy Child grew, Mary observed and 19, 51. treasured in her heart every happening that chimed with her cherished secret ; but the general belief even among the Christians of primitive days was that He was the son of Joseph and Mary by ordinary generation. Hence it is that after the Jewish fashion they took pains to trace His genealogy through Joseph—a futile task if Joseph were not really His father. The secret was unknown even to St. Paul ; and indeed he would be the very last to learn it, since as the Apostle of the Gentiles he was in ill odour with the Jewish Christians, who accounted him a traitor to the ancient Faith. Only after Mary had

passed "to where beyond these voices there is peace" was it published. The story is first told in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, which appeared shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70; and then in the Gospel according to St. Luke some fifteen years later. It is remarkable that in the former it is told from Joseph's point of view and in the latter from Mary's; and the reason is that the Jewish Evangelist had learned it from the circle of Joseph's intimates, while the Gentile Evangelist, who is distinguished among the sacred writers by his chivalrous sympathy with despised womankind, had learned it from Mary's friends.

At the first glance it may seem surprising that it is unrecorded in the Fourth Gospel. Certainly St. John knew it; for from the day of the Crucifixion until her death his house was the home of <sup>Cf. Jo. xix.</sup> Mary, and surely she would confide it to "the <sup>27.</sup> disciple whom Jesus had loved" and who played a son's part by her. But indeed it is in no wise surprising; for his purpose in writing his Gospel was to supplement the narratives of his predecessors, and he never repeats what they have already recorded unless where he would elucidate or correct it. His silence is thus a tacit approval of their stories of the Virgin Birth. And does he indeed make no mention of it? In the common text of the prologue to his Gospel it is written: "As many as received Him, <sup>Jo. i. 12,</sup> to them gave He the right to become children <sup>13.</sup> of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were begotten, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." As it is quoted, however, by several of the early Fathers



of the West, especially St. Irenæus some two centuries earlier than our oldest manuscript, the passage runs thus: "them that believe in the name of Him who was begotten, not of bloods"—the mingled blood of human parents—"nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man (an husband), but of God." The passage is thus a distinct statement of the Virgin Birth; and according to the earliest testimony it was so written by the Evangelist.

Full five months had elapsed since Joseph took Mary to his home, and her time was near, when their quietude was disturbed by a public event—the taking of the census which the Emperor Augustus had instituted throughout his wide dominion at regular intervals of fourteen years. The first had been appointed for the year 8 B.C.; but it had been delayed in Palestine by civil commotion, and was only now taken in the summer of the year 5. Elsewhere the people were registered where they dwelt, but the Jewish custom was that Cf. 2 Sam. xxiv. 2. they should be registered by their tribes and families; and thus it was necessary for Joseph to betake himself to Bethlehem. It was a three days' journey, and unfit though she was, he took Mary with him. It was not that she must enrol her name in person, since each citizen registered his household; but rather, it would appear, because, vexed by slanderous tongues, Joseph was minded to quit Nazareth and settle in his native town.

The season was propitious, since it was the month of August; and they travelled gently, Joseph afoot leading the ass on which, it is said, Mary rode. Yet even so the ordeal was too severe, and just as they reached Bethlehem her pangs seized her. There was

no time to seek out a lodging, and they betook themselves to that rude hostel, the caravanserai of the town. Unhappily it was already crowded, since they were not the only strangers whom the business of the census had brought to Bethlehem, and, travelling slowly, they had arrived late. Every apartment was tenanted, and there was nothing for it but that Mary should lie down among the cattle in the courtyard. There "she brought forth her Son, her first-born"; and, swaddling Him in the little garments which she had fashioned in loving anticipation, she cradled Him in a manger.

Eastward and southward from Bethlehem stretched the Wilderness of Judæa, those rugged pastures where of old David had tended the sheep of his father Jesse, and whither every springtime 1 Sam.  
xvii. 28. the Jewish shepherds in after days conducted their flocks and kept them in the open until the month of October, folding them at evenfall and at break of day leading them forth to pasture. On that memorable night a company of shepherds were seated round their camp-fire, guarding the fold, when an angel appeared, "apparelled in celestial light," and told them what had befallen in the village—the birth of the Promised Saviour; and therewith the starry sky rang with music—the praises of the heavenly host. The vision faded, and the astonished shepherds hastened over the moor and found the mother and child, and with them not Joseph alone but others who had gathered to their aid and who heard with wonderment the shepherds' tale.

It was fitting that these should be the first to hear the glad tidings. For in those days shepherds bore

an evil repute. They were indeed hardy and brave, daily risking their lives in defending their flocks from marauders—savage beasts and roving  
Cf. Jo. x. 11, 12. Bedawin ; but violence breeds violence, and a Jewish shepherd was little better than a brigand. And thus it was fitting that a company of rude shepherds should be the first to hear of the birth of the Saviour who “came not to call the righteous but sinners.”

The caravanseraï was but a temporary harbour, and on the sixth day, it is said, after the Birth they  
Cf. Gen. xvii. 12. removed to a house of their own in the village. Next day but one, according to the sacred ordinance, the Child was circumcised and received the name which He should bear during  
Cf. Ac. vii. 45 ; Heb. iv. 8. His earthly sojourn—JESUS, the Greek form of the old Hebrew name Joshua, which signified “The Lord is salvation.” For forty days after  
Cf. Lev. xii. she had borne a son a Jewish mother was accounted ceremonially unclean, and “the fulfilment of the days of her purifying” was celebrated by the sacrifice of a lamb or, with the poorer sort, a pair of turtle-doves. Moreover, since the Lord claimed His people’s first-fruits, every first-born both human and animal was His ; and the law was that while a clean beast’s firstling was sacrificed and an unclean beast’s redeemed, a human first-born should “surely be redeemed.” The price of his redemption was five shekels, and its payment was his “presentation to the Lord.” For neither ordinance was attendance at the Temple necessary ; but Jerusalem was only five miles to the north of Bethlehem, and Joseph and Mary, with the reverence which every devout Jew felt for

the Holy City and the Holy Place, repaired thither with the Holy Child.

In those evil days when Jerusalem was crushed by oppression and torn by faction, there were gracious souls in her midst, the Lord's "hidden ones," who abode in His fellowship, "looking for the consolation of Israel," the Advent of the Promised Saviour. One of these was Symeon, an aged saint who cherished a devout assurance that he would live to witness it. Weary of the world, he was longing, like a captive, for the glad consummation which would be the signal for his release; and it happened that he was there, engaged in holy communion, when Mary brought her poor offering of doves. Since Bethlehem was so near Jerusalem, the story of the shepherds had surely reached his expectant ears, and he recognised the Holy Family. He took the Babe in his arms and blessed God that at length his eyes had seen the promised salvation. Just then another saint appeared on the scene—a venerable prophetess named Hannah. A wife for seven years and a widow for eighty-four, she was now, if like Mary she had been married at the age of twelve, an hundred and three years of age; and she was the very pattern of holy widowhood. Devotion was her continual employment and the Temple her loved resort. She heard Symeon's thanksgiving and took up the refrain of praise. And she told the glad tidings to her devout acquaintances.

Thus it was discovered to chosen representatives of the sinners and the saints of Israel that the Saviour had come. But He was more than the Messiah of the Jews. He was the Redeemer of the World; and

Cf. Lk. ii.  
17-20.

Cf. ii. 37  
R.V.

Cf. I Tim.  
v. 5.

He was fittingly manifested also to representatives of heathendom. In those days and for many a long century afterwards it was believed that the stars ruled earthly affairs, and astrologers professed to read in the heavens the destinies of men and nations. It is not a little remarkable that, as astronomical calculations have ascertained, the year 7 B.C. witnessed a planetary phenomenon which recurs at regular intervals of some eight centuries. On May 29 of that year there was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the 20th degree of the constellation Pisces; on September 29 they were again in conjunction in the 16th degree, and yet again on December 5 in the 15th degree; and then in the year 6 B.C. the planet Mars entered the conjunction. The recurrence of the phenomenon in 1604-5 A.D. was followed, as Kepler (1571-1630) observed, by the appearance of a brilliant star, which shone continuously for some eighteen months, and then vanished.

Chaldæa was the home of astrology, and there three "wise men," *magi*, that is, astrologers, observed that phenomenon in 7 B.C. By the rules of their art they interpreted it as portending the birth of a King who should sway the world; and they set forth to greet Him and render Him homage, taking with them, after

cf. 1 Ki. the ancient fashion, rich gifts as offerings.  
x. 2.

One took gold, another frankincense, and the third myrrh. Where the event would befall they knew not; but, travelling westward and making inquiry, they at length discovered a clue. History records that at that period of moral decadence even the heathen were expecting the dawn of a new era, and, influenced by rumours of Israel's Messianic Hope,



they were looking to the Holy Land for its inauguration. In their progress westward the Magi learned of this expectation, and they bent their steps to Jerusalem. There they arrived in the month of September, 5 B.C., and eagerly inquired: "Where is the newborn King of the Jews? We saw His star in the East, and we are come to do obeisance to Him."

The city was startled. The evil reign of Herod the Great was nearing its close amid civil and domestic disaffection. It was less than a year since a prediction had been propagated by the Pharisees that the throne would pass to the house of Pheroras his brother; whence there would arise a mighty and wonder-working King, none other than the Promised Messiah. Its authors had been put to death, but the prediction was remembered; and the question of those eastern strangers excited commotion. Herod took alarm. He would avert the menace to his house by discovering the Child and destroying Him. First he convened the Court of the Sanhedrin and inquired of the Scribes, the official interpreters of the Sacred Law, the prophetic birthplace of the Messiah. It was Bethlehem, Cf. Mic. v. 2. they told him; and he then summoned the Magi to a private interview, and inquiring the date of the appearance of the star which had heralded the King's birth, learned that it was just two years ago. This, then, was the earliest limit of the event; and professing that he too desired to pay Him homage, he directed them to Bethlehem and bade them return when they had found the Child, and tell him where He was.

It was late in the day, but the star which had lit their long quest was sparkling in the sky, and they



hastened to Bethlehem. There they discovered the holy dwelling and presented their offerings. They had distrusted Herod's professions, and their talk with Joseph would confirm their suspicions. Their sleep that night was disturbed by ominous dreams, and in the morning they betook themselves homeward without returning to Jerusalem. Joseph too was alarmed by what they had told him, and a dream confirmed his misgivings. In the morning he quitted Bethlehem and fled southward with Mary and the Child. Their destination was Egypt; and it was indeed a fitting asylum. For there was there a large population of Jewish settlers, and among these Joseph would have acquaintances and perhaps kinsfolk and would find a home and a livelihood.

His apprehensions were justified. Herod was infuriated when the Magi never returned. By instituting a search in the village he would have raised an alarm, and his victim might have escaped. And so he would make sure work of the business. After the manner of ancient tyrants, he had in his service a band of *speculatores*, officers who at his command disposed of any who had incurred his displeasure; and he despatched his ruffians to Bethlehem with orders to butcher every male child born within the last two years. His mandate was executed; and though in so small a community the victims would indeed be few, it was a fiendish atrocity, the foulest infamy of that bloody reign.

## HIS CHILDHOOD

Mt. ii. 19-23 ; Lk. ii. 39-52.

It would be early in October when the Holy Family migrated to Egypt. On April 1, 4 B.C., Herod died, and they were then free to return ; but some time would elapse ere the news reached Egypt and Joseph had settled his affairs, and thus it would be the month of October, as tradition alleges, after a year's exile, that they set out for home. On reaching the southern borders of Judæa, Joseph received disquieting information. Immediately on his accession Archelaus had evinced his disposition by the massacre of three thousand of the worshippers who had assembled at Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover. He was following in his father's steps, and Bethlehem would have been no safe abode for the exiles. Accordingly Joseph avoided Judæa and, travelling northward to Galilee, reoccupied his former home at Nazareth.

Here the curtain falls, and for the next ten years the Holy Family is hidden from our view. The sole record is one brief yet revealing sentence : " The Child grew and gathered strength and ever fuller wisdom, and God's grace was upon Him." Lk. ii. 40.

It appears also from the subsequent narrative that ere long there were other children in the home—  
four brothers, James, Joseph or, as the name was in Greek, Joses, Simon, and Judas, besides several sisters. In deference to the ecclesiastical

Mt. xiii.  
55, 56 ;  
Mk. vi. 3.

fiction of the perpetual virginity of Mary, it has been fancied that they were either children of Joseph by a former marriage or nephews and nieces of Mary, her sister's children; but it is written that Jesus was "her first-born son," and these were the children whom she afterwards bore to Joseph in their home at Nazareth.

Lk. ii. 7;  
cf. Mt. i.  
25.

In His sixth or seventh year, according to the Jewish ordinance, He would enter the elementary school attached to the local synagogue. Since the manual was the Book of the Law, it was denominated *beth ha-sepher*, "The House of the Book"; and there until His tenth year He learned the rudiments and then for the next two years was instructed in the Sacred Law, committing its precepts to memory after the Jewish method of *mishnah* or "repetition."

All the while He breathed the atmosphere of a devout and loving home; and unacquainted though He was with the secret which Joseph and Mary had hidden in their hearts, gradually there would dawn upon Him a sense of His heavenly origin. Here indeed we are confronted by an ineffable mystery; yet it may help us in some measure to penetrate it and more fully appreciate the testimony of the Evangelists if we consider the thoughts of philosophers and poets regarding the kindred mystery of the origin of the human soul. The most ancient and persistent theory is that of Pre-existence; and nowhere is it so movingly presented as in that sublimest of lyrics, Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Childhood*:

“ Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar :  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory, do we come  
From God, who is our home :  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy !  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy,  
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy ;  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended ;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.”

The thought here is that in childhood our immortal souls are haunted by “ shadowy recollections ” of a former state, but these are gradually overwhelmed by the world's rude noise and obliterated by its defiling contact. It is a fading memory ; but could we only maintain converse with Heaven, then “ the glory and the freshness of the dream ” would survive and the memory brighten. And even so it happened with the Incarnate Redeemer. The purity of His soul was never soiled, its serenity never clouded ; and thus His memory of “ that imperial palace whence He came ” instead of fading waxed ever larger and clearer until it crystallised into a consciousness and a vision of God.

That momentous crisis is the one recorded incident of His childhood. In August, 7 A.D., He attained His thirteenth year, the age when a Jewish boy became *bar mitzvah*, "a son of the commandment," a responsible citizen of the Commonwealth of Israel; and at the ensuing Passover, which fell that year on April 9, He accompanied Joseph and Mary on the annual pilgrimage to the Holy City. The sacred celebration, at once commemorative of the historic deliverance of the Exodus and prophetic of the Messianic redemption, proved an illuminative experience for Him. It interpreted the thoughts which had been stirring in His breast, and revealed to Him Who He was and wherefore He had come. At the conclusion of the festal week the worshippers departed homeward, the men and the women travelling, according to custom, in separate companies; and when the caravan reached the first station on the route, Joseph and Mary discovered that He was missing. During the day's march each had supposed that He was in the other's company, but now it appeared that He had been left behind. They retraced their steps, looking for Him all the way, and it would be late on the second day after their departure when they got back to Jerusalem. Next day they resumed their quest, and at length they found Him where they least expected—in the Rabbinical College, within the Temple precincts, where some eight years later Saul of Tarsus was educated at the feet of Rabbi Gamaliel. He had entered the class-room and seated Himself among the students. They were accustomed not merely to hear the Rabbi's discourse but to put questions whenever difficulties occurred to their minds; and He was joining in the

discussion. He was the youngest of them all, since it was not until he had attained his fifteenth year that a Jewish student began his theological curriculum ; yet He evinced so rare an intelligence that teacher and scholars alike were astonished.

Joseph and Mary took Him away, and she gently upbraided Him for the anxiety which He had occasioned them. " Why is it," He answered, " that you were seeking Me? Did you not know that it is in My Father's House that I should be? " These are His first recorded words, and they are very significant. He had discovered His heavenly relationship and His divine commission, and thenceforth He owned no human kinship and no earthly home. God was His Father, and the Temple, where for generations God had dwelt among His people and manifested His grace and glory, was His proper resort.

From that day He recognised that He was the Promised Messiah and that His life-work was the achievement of the redemption prefigured on the prophetic pages of Holy Scripture ; but " His hour was not yet come." He returned to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary and resumed His place in that humble home. On attaining his twelfth year a Jewish lad was put to the learning of a trade, and Jesus naturally followed Joseph's business of carpentry and worked beside him, making, says St. Justin Martyr, ploughs and yokes for the husbandmen who tilled the fields about the village. It seems, since he appears no more in the sacred narrative after that memorable visit to the Passover, that Joseph presently died ; and it devolved on Jesus to earn a livelihood not alone for Himself but for Mary and her

Mk. vi. 3.

other children. It was a heavy burden for one so young, but He bore it bravely, faithful to the hard duty which each day brought and thus preparing Himself for the high ministry which awaited Him when the appointed hour should arrive.



HIS ENTRANCE ON HIS MINISTRY



## HIS CALL

Mt. iii ; Mk. i. 1-11 ; Lk. iii. 1-18, 21, 22 ; cf. Jo. i. 30-34.

AT length the hour came. Toward the close of the year 25 A.D. the Jewish people were deeply stirred. A prophet had arisen and was proclaiming a startling message with the old prophetic inspiration unknown for generations. He was the son of Mary's kinswoman Elisabeth, who had been granted in their old age to her and her husband Zechariah, the priest of *Khirbet el-Jehud*, and whom in their gratitude they had named John, "The Lord is gracious." He was six months older than Jesus ; and while the latter was employed in His workshop at Nazareth, John was employed, like Amos of old, as a herdsman or a husbandman in the wilderness of Judæa.

There in fulfilment of the Nazirite vow imposed upon him ere his birth he led an ascetic life. He abstained from intoxicants and went unshorn. His food was the pods of the locust-tree and the honey of the wild bees so abundant in the wilds of Palestine ; and his attire a cloak of camel's hair, whether the undressed fell or cloth woven of the coarse wool, with a leathern band in lieu of the customary girdle gaily coloured and studded with metal and beads. It was the sort of life that makes an enthusiast, and he not only shared the expectation so general in those distressful days that

Lk. i. 80 ;  
cf. Am. i.  
1, vii. 14.

Lk. i. 15 ;  
cf. Num.  
vi, Jud.  
xiii. 4, 5.

Cf. 1 Sam.  
xiv. 25-27.

the advent of the Messiah, the Promised Deliverer, could not long be delayed but attained a prophetic assurance of His immediate appearing. And this message he proclaimed, summoning the people to repentance in preparation for the solemn event.

The scene of his preaching was the southern ford of the Jordan, where some fifteen centuries earlier the Israelites under Joshua had crossed over to Gilgal,

and where there stood twelve stones popularly regarded as the same which they had taken from the river-bed and set up for a memorial.

The place was known indifferently as Bethabara, "The House of the Crossing," and Bethany, "The

House of the Ferry-boat"; and he chose it not merely because it afforded him a ready

audience, being frequented by travellers betwixt Jerusalem and Galilee by the eastern route through Peræa, but because it suited a peculiar requirement of his ministry. For he practised the rite of Baptism, whence he was styled "John the Baptist." It was no novel rite. In token of their cleansing from heathen pollution converts to the Jewish faith were subjected to a ceremonial ablution known as "the Baptism of Proselytes"; and John merely adopted this ordinance and gave it a larger scope, proclaiming that even as the heathen needed cleansing ere they were admitted to the Commonwealth of Israel, so did the Jews ere they could enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is no wonder that his preaching created a mighty stir. His very aspect was arresting. Even such had been the garb of Elijah, that stern prophet of old whose memory still retained its peculiar

Josh. iv ;

cf. Mt. iii.

9.

Cf. Jo. i.

28 R.V.,

A.V.

Cf. 2 Ki.

i. 8.

fascination ; and it happened that in those days there prevailed an expectation, based on the latest word of ancient prophecy, that on the eve of the Messiah's advent Elijah would reappear and prepare the nation to receive Him. What wonder, then, that the people were moved and thronged to Bethabara ? First they gathered from Judæa and Jerusalem, and then, as his fame spread, from remoter parts. Early in the year 26 a number of Galileans appeared on the scene ; and one of these was Jesus. Presently He presented Himself as a candidate for baptism, and John demurred. It was not that he knew Jesus ; for this was the first time he had ever seen His face. His parents, old folk when he was born thirty years ago, had been long deceased, and he and Jesus had all their days lived remote from each other. They now met as strangers, and it would surprise John when Jesus presented Himself. For he baptised none but penitents who confessed their sin ; and Jesus "knew no sin" and made no confession. At the first blush John would on this account deem Him unfit ; but as he talked with Him, his judgment changed. Like all who ever had to do with Him in the days of His flesh, he recognised the heavenly grace which shone in His face and breathed like fragrance in His speech ; and he bowed before Him. "It is I," he exclaimed, "that have need to be baptised by you ; and you—you come to me !" But Jesus insisted. He was the Messiah ; and, "although He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth," He would be "numbered with the transgressors," bearing the burden of their guilt and

Mal. iv. 5,  
6 ; cf. Mt.  
xvii. 10-  
13 ; Mk.  
ix. 11-13.

Cf. Jo. i.  
31.

2 Cor. v.  
21.

Is. liii. 9,  
12.

making Himself one with them that they might be one with Him.

His baptism was not a confession : it was a consecration—His self-consecration to His Messianic ministry. And it was owned of God. It is told of St. Malachy of Armagh that once, as he ministered at the altar, a dove flew in through an open window in a flood of light and after fluttering round the church rested upon the crucifix before him. It was hailed as a visitation of the Holy Spirit, the Heavenly Dove. And a like thing befell at Bethabara. It was evening, and the light of the setting sun broke through the golden shadows of the west ; and as Jesus stood praying on the river-bank amid the sudden blaze of glory, a dove hovered over Him, “ her wings covered with silver, and her pinions with yellow gold.” To the multitude it was a mere natural occurrence, but the Baptist perceived its spiritual significance. The dove was a sacred emblem of the Divine Spirit who, it was written, on the morning of Creation had “ brooded upon the face of the waters—as a dove,” adds the Jewish interpreter, “ over her nest ” ; and John recalled how it was written of the Messiah that “ the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon Him.” The truth flashed home to his mind : That holy Stranger was none other than the Saviour whose advent he had been proclaiming.

And immediately his surmise was confirmed. A heavenly voice spoke. It is ever the law of a divine manifestation that it is hidden from carnal sense ; and the voice was unperceived by the multitude.

Ps. lxxviii.

13.

Cf. Jo. i.

31-34.

Gen. i. 2

R.V.

marg.

Is. xl. 2.

It spoke to John, and to him it said: "This is My Son, My beloved, in whom I am well pleased." And it spoke to Jesus, and to Him it said: "Thou art My Son, My beloved: in Thee I am well pleased." What did it mean? "The Son of God" was a Messianic title. Cf. Ex. iv. 22; Ho. xi. 1. Primarily a designation of the nation of Israel, it by and by denoted her king, the nation's head and representative, and then the Messiah, the King of Israel *par excellence*. And thus the voice was a declaration of the Messiahship of Jesus; and its purpose was twofold. For John it was a certification of the truth of his surmise; and for Jesus it was the summons which He had been so long awaiting—the call to enter upon His Messianic ministry. The expected hour had come. Cf. Mk. i. 11; Lk. iii. 22. Cf. Pss. ii. 6, 7, lxxxix. 27.



## HIS TEMPTATION

Mk. i. 12, 13; Mt. iv. 1-11; Lk. iv. 1-13.

THROUGHOUT His ministry, as will duly appear, Jesus was wont, ere taking any momentous step or facing any ordeal, to seek some quiet retreat where He might commune with His own heart and take counsel with God. And even so now, when He was called to embark on His redemptive mission, He withdrew from Bethabara with its thronging multitude and betook Himself to the wilderness, that rugged waste of barren mountains west of the Jordan infested by wild beasts and

lawless brigands. There He remained for  
Cf. Mk. i. 13; Lk. x. 30. forty days, "being tempted by the Devil."

It was a spiritual experience. There was no visible apparition of the Tempter: else there would have been no temptation. For it is because they are presented as counsels of prudence and policy that his allurements are entertained. Were they recognised as his personal overtures, they would be instantly rejected.

So it was with Jesus. For Him as for us temptation was a spiritual experience. On the threshold of His ministry He was confronted by a perplexing problem. He was the Messiah, and He must win the people's faith. In those days certain expectations prevailed regarding the Messiah, and if He ran counter to these He would hardly win recognition; and thus arose the question what attitude He should adopt toward the popular ideals.

The dominant expectation was that the Messiah would be a mighty King of David's lineage, who would arise and crush the heathen oppressor and re-establish the ancient throne in more than its ancient splendour ; and it is significant that all the numerous pretenders to Messiahship in those latter days assumed the rôle of national deliverer, inciting the indignant people to rebellion against the imperial government. That course inevitably occurred to the mind of Jesus as He contemplated the task which lay before Him. Indeed it might seem that no other was possible ; for who would believe that He was the Messiah unless He fulfilled the universal expectation ? Nor was it in truth an impracticable course. Was it not written of the Messiah that He would be a mighty Conqueror, "breaking the nations with a rod of iron, and dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel" ? And had He presented Himself in this character, He would have won an immediate and enthusiastic response. For the nation was ready for revolt. It was groaning under an intolerable tyranny, and recently the party of the Zealots had arisen—a confederacy of desperate patriots pledged to truceless enmity against Rome and eager to renew the Maccabean struggle for independence. He had but to proclaim Himself the Promised Deliverer, and thousands would have rallied to His standard. For any other it might have been a wild enterprise foredoomed to failure ; but He had the hosts of Heaven at His command, and His triumph was assured. It seemed the inevitable course, but could He pursue it ? It was the path of violence, and "violence," said one of old, "belongeth not to God." It is the

Ps. ii. 9.

Cf. Mt.  
xxvi. 53.

Devil's way, and if He chose it, would He not be doing homage to the Devil?

As He pondered this question, He found Himself on a lofty height, perhaps the crest of the mountain which overhangs the Plain of Jericho. Thence He beheld a wide prospect. The Holy Land lay beneath Him with the lines of its highways reaching beyond the horizon toward Egypt, Arabia, Babylonia, Syria, and the western sea-gates to the Isles of Greece and Imperial Rome. A vision of "all the kingdoms of the world"—that world which He had come to win—arose before Him; and the Tempter whispered to His soul: "All these I will give you and the glory of them, if you fall down and do me obeisance." Yes, that was indeed the condition, and He instantly rejected it. It was to establish the Kingdom of Heaven that He had come; and a kingdom built on violence is not the Kingdom of Heaven.

Another Jewish expectation in those days was that the Messiah would be a worker of miracles, and would Cf. Jo. vii. 31. attest His claims by "signs and wonders"; and this rôle also was assumed by every pretender to Messiahship. Josephus tells how one Theudas in the reign of Claudius assembled a multitude in Peræa and promised that if they would follow him, he would, like Joshua of old, divide the Jordan before them and they would pass over on dry ground and march in triumph to Jerusalem; and how in the time Cf. Ac. xxi. 38. of the Procurator Felix another adventurer, an Egyptian Jew, promised his dupes that, if they accompanied him to Mount Olivet, they would behold the walls of Jerusalem fall at his command like the walls of Jericho at the blast of Joshua's trumpets.

It was indeed a just expectation. Jesus was well assured that the power of God would support Him in His ministry; and the idea presented itself to His mind that here lay an opportunity for attesting His Messiahship and winning the nation's faith. Those uplands commanded a distant prospect of Jerusalem and her Temple, and He thought how at the approaching Feast of the Passover the city would be thronged with worshippers from near and far. What if He took His stand on "the Pinnacle of the Temple"—that lofty battlement overlooking on the one side the sacred court and on the other the dizzy depth of the Kidron Valley—and in view of the multitude of spectators precipitated Himself thence? Surely, according to the ancient promise, He would be sustained by angel hands and carried securely to the pavement beneath. So startling a miracle would attest His Messiahship and win Him at the very outset the faith of the Jewish world.

Instantly there flashed into His mind that divine admonition to the Israelites of old: "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God"; and it revealed the thought as a suggestion of the Tempter. It is indeed faith's privilege to confront with serene confidence whatever ordeal God may appoint, but not to run uncalled upon needless and reckless adventures, fondly trusting that He will interpose.

For forty days He continued in the wilderness, and it is written by St. Matthew that "He fasted" all the while and by St. Luke that "He did eat nothing." They mean alike; for is it not written of John the Baptist that "he neither ate nor drank," signifying merely that his ascetic fare was

the natural products of the wilderness? And so it was with Jesus those forty days. His only food was the sparse berries which He gathered, and His only drink the water of the gushing springs.

So long as His mind was occupied with the vexing problems of His ministry, He remained oblivious of physical need; but now that these were solved, He felt the pangs of hunger and craved food. His eye lighted on the lumps of limestone littering the mountainside, and the thought came to Him that He might by the power of God convert one into a loaf of bread. Perhaps He might, for with God everything is possible; and did He not ere long turn water into wine at a wedding-feast, and afterwards multiply five loaves and two little fishes into a plenteous meal for a multitude of hungry folk?

Yet He promptly dismissed the thought. Perhaps He could have done it; but it would not have been a miracle: it would have been magic, a trick of legerdemain, outraging the natural order. It is characteristic of our Lord's miracles that they were never violations of natural law but rather accelerations of its operation. "He it was," says St. Augustine, "that made the wine that day at the wedding in those six water-jars who makes it every year in the vines. For even as what the attendants put into the water-jars was turned into wine by the Lord's operation, so what the clouds pour forth is turned into wine by the same Lord's operation." And again: "He multiplied the five loaves who multiplies the seeds sprouting in the earth, so that a few grains are sown and the barns are filled. But because He does this every year no one wonders. It is not the insignificance

of the act that removes the wonderment, but its constancy."

It should, moreover, be considered that no miracle of our Lord was ever wrought on His own behalf ; and this not merely because He cared for the needs of others and had no thought of His own, but because His miracles were never mere works of compassion. They were attestations of His divine mission, and they were wrought that men might believe in Him Cf. Jo. ii. xi, xi. 42. and through Him in the Father who had sent Him. For merely temporal good no miracle should ever be required, since God is supreme, giving or withholding as seems to Him most meet, and it becomes us ever to bow before His sovereign will, trusting His providence and accepting His appointments.



## HIS PUBLIC MANIFESTATION

Jo. i. 19—ii. 11.

MEANWHILE much had been happening at Bethabara. The religious authorities at Jerusalem were watching the progress of the Baptist's ministry; and as the enthusiasm increased, they were troubled. Who, they wondered, could he be? Several possibilities occurred to them. He might actually be the Messiah; or, if this were beyond belief, he might still, according to the common expectation, be Elijah or some other of the ancient prophets returned to herald the Messiah's advent. It were well to ascertain the truth; and so they despatched a deputation to interview him.

On their arrival at Bethabara he told them plainly that he was neither the Messiah nor Elijah nor any other of the prophets. Yet he was the Messiah's herald commissioned, in the prophet's phrase, to Is. xl. 3. "make straight the way of the Lord." And he further told them that not merely was His advent imminent but, though they did not recognise Him, He was already in their midst.

Next day Jesus reappeared; and when the Baptist saw Him approaching, he paused in his discourse and pointed to Him. The Passover—that ancient and solemn feast at once commemorative of the deliverance from Egypt and prophetic of the grander deliverance which the Messiah should achieve—was now drawing nigh; and it may be that he had been discoursing of



the offering of the Paschal Lamb and its imminent fulfilment. "See!" he cried, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Yonder is the Messiah whose advent I have been announcing to you."

It was an amazing declaration, and it would be received by the multitude with incredulity and indeed with derision. The Messiah whom they were expecting was a King of David's lineage, and they styled Him now "the Son of David" and now, in precisely the same sense, "the Son of God." No wonder that when the Baptist pointed to Jesus and proclaimed Him the Messiah, they were amazed. For what was Jesus in their eyes? A simple peasant from despised Galilee, one of the common folk. And the Hebrew for "the common folk" was "the sons of man" (*b'ne 'adam*)—a phrase which occurs repeatedly in the Book of Psalms and is rendered in our Version now Pss. xlix. 2, lxii. 9. "the low" and again "men of low degree." "This the Messiah!" they would exclaim. "This is no 'Son of David,' no 'Son of God,' but one of us borrel folk, us 'sons of man.'"

He heard the sneer, and He caught up the contemptuous phrase. Yes, that would be His designation. Thenceforth He called Himself "the Son of Man." Others styled Him "the Son of David" and "the Son of God," and He accepted the ascription since He was indeed the King of Israel, though in a deeper sense than they conceived; but He never so styled Himself. "The Son of Man" was His chosen designation, proclaiming His fellowship with the humble and despised.

Evidently it was now late, and that day nothing further happened; but next day the Baptist was

abroad with two of the disciples whom, after the manner of the ancient prophets, he had attached to himself. One of these was Andrew, a fisherman from the Lake of Galilee. The second is unnamed, but he was surely that other Galilean fisherman, John the son of Zebedee, afterwards the Evangelist who tells the story ; for it was ever the wont of the sacred writers to conceal themselves, and largely as he figured on the scene, St. John never once mentions his own name in his Gospel, referring to himself, where he must, as "another disciple" or "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Presently they espied Jesus meditatively pacing to and fro. "See!" said the Baptist, "the Lamb of God"; and the two with eager curiosity followed Him. Turning suddenly, He confronted them and inquired: "What are you seeking?" They supposed that He resented their intrusion, and stammered out a lame excuse. "Rabbi," said they, as though hospitably solicitous for His accommodation in the crowded village, "where are you lodging?" "Come," He answered, "and you will see." His lodging was doubtless some hillside retreat where, as He was wont during His homeless ministry, He passed the serene nights in the open, wrapped in His mantle.

It was a memorable crisis in their experience, and when the Evangelist wrote the story at Ephesus some seventy years later, he recalled the very hour. "It was," he says, "about the tenth hour," which signifies not, according to the common reckoning, 4 o'clock in the afternoon but, according to that which obtained in the Province of Asia, 10 o'clock in the forenoon. All that day they spent with Jesus, and His poor lodging proved for them "none other than the House

of God and the gate of Heaven." For He communed with them there and revealed His grace to their souls.

It was late when they left Him, too late to tell the discovery which they had made; but Andrew was astir by daybreak <sup>1</sup> and, seeking out his brother Simon, who like himself was a Galilean fisherman and had travelled south to hear the Baptist, he greeted him with the tidings: "We have found the Messiah!" No doubt Simon had heard the Baptist's announcement the other evening and shared the general incredulity. Had he known who was meant, he might have demurred; but Andrew did not stay to explain. He was sure that, if only his brother saw that wonderful face, his doubts would vanish as his own had done. And so it came to pass. What was it that won his faith? There was no miracle, no argument. "Jesus," it is written, "looked upon him, and said: Cf. Jo. i. 42 R.V." "You are Simon, the son of John: you shall be called Cephas." Only a look of "those eyes of far perception" and a kindly promise. What did the promise mean? Of old, when a man achieved some memorable exploit, he got a new name commemorative thereof. "Seldom," says the Arabian poet, "hast thou seen a person honoured with a surname but thou wilt find, if thou search, that his character is expressed by it." As yet Simon was merely a rude fisherman, warm-hearted and impulsive, but Jesus read his soul and perceived what grace would yet make of him—a strong, steadfast, devoted man. He was then merely Simon, but he would one day be *Cephas*, which signified in the Jewish vernacular "The Rock" or in Greek

<sup>1</sup> In Jo. i. 41 for "first" read, on ancient authority, "early in the morning."

*Peter.* And Jesus gave him his new name ere he had earned it, that it might serve as a continual challenge to his manhood. It was a generous recognition of the ideal which was stirring in the rude fisherman's breast. It showed him that here was One who understood him and believed in his latent possibilities ; and the look which accompanied it won his heart.

On the morrow Jesus took His departure for Galilee, being engaged to attend a wedding at the village of Cana on the next day but one. It was a three days' journey, and since Jewish weddings were celebrated *Cf. Mt. xxv. 1-13.* after nightfall, by setting out early He would arrive in time. It happened that John and Andrew and Simon were also bidden ; and so were two other Galileans whom the fame of the Baptist's preaching had brought south. One of these was Nathanael, who, since he belonged to Cana, was doubtless a friend *Cf. Jo. xxi. 2.* of the bride's family. The other was Philip, and since he belonged to Bethsaida or "Fisher-ton," the fisher-folk's quarter of Capernaum, he too was a fisherman. His heart had been moved by his experience at Bethabara, and he would fain have followed the example of his three fellow-townsmen ; but his natural diffidence restrained him. Jesus had been observing him ; and it is written that ere starting on the journey "Jesus finds Philip." It was no chance encounter. He "found Philip" even as Andrew the previous morning had "found his own brother Simon." He knew what was in his heart—his yearning and his fearfulness. "Follow Me" He said, and Philip gladly obeyed ; and the Master and His four disciples set forward on their journey.

Nathanael had taken the road before them. Like

Philip he was deeply impressed, but his attitude was different from Philip's. He was, as Jesus presently describes him, "truly an Israelite, one in whom there was no guile." And what does this mean? "Guile" is the same word as St. Paul employs when he speaks of "handling the Word of God *deceitfully*"; 2 Cor. iv. and it precisely defines Nathanael's attitude. <sup>2</sup>.

He had heard the Baptist's testimony, and he would gladly have accepted it and hailed Jesus as the Messiah; but something gave him pause. As a true Israelite he knew the Scriptures, and their testimony was Cf. Mt. ii. that the Messiah would be born in holy <sup>4-6</sup>.

Bethlehem. Jesus had indeed been born there, but Nathanael knew Him only as a Nazarene; and Nazareth was a town of evil repute in those days. Its folk were turbulent and lawless, and it was a common proverb that "nothing good could come out of Nazareth." How then could Jesus be <sup>26-30</sup>.

the Messiah? That was the problem which was vexing Nathanael. He would fain have accepted Jesus, but the testimony of Scripture seemed clear, and he would not "handle the Word of God *deceitfully*."

Early that morning he had set out from Bethabara, and in the heat of the day he seated himself in the shade of a fig-tree by the wayside. As he sat, Jesus and His company approached, and Philip, recognising his acquaintance in the distance, sped forward and breathlessly jerked out the tidings: "Him that Moses wrote of in the Law—and the Prophets—we have found—Jesus the son of Joseph—him from Nazareth!" Such confidence regarding the question which was so perplexing himself provoked Nathanael, and he



retorted impatiently with the proverb: "Out of Nazareth can there be anything good?" Philip attempted no argument. Indeed he had no opportunity; for Jesus and the others were now close at hand. "Come and see" said he, and conducted Nathanael toward Him.

"See!" said Jesus to His companions, "truly an Israelite, one in whom there is no guile"; and so accurate a definition of his mood surprised Nathanael. "Whence," he exclaimed, "your understanding of me?" He fancied that this was his first introduction to Jesus, never dreaming that those sympathetic eyes had been observing him at Bethabara and reading his troubled soul. No introduction was needed. "When you were under the fig-tree, ere Philip hailed you, I saw you." It was a revelation to Nathanael of a love which had been seeking him amid his perplexity; and more compelling than the words of those gracious lips was the look of that blessed face. It won his heart as it had won Simon's, and he bowed before it. His doubt vanished. Surely this was the Messiah. "Rabbi," he cried, "you are 'the Son of God,' you are 'the King of Israel'!"

His confession gladdened Jesus. It was a premonition of the ever larger faith which fuller experience would inspire in His disciples. "Because I said, 'I saw you beneath the fig-tree,' you believe? Greater things than these you will see." Then, turning to the others, He addressed them all: "Verily, verily I tell you, you will see 'the heaven opened  
Cf. Gen. xxviii. 12. and the angels of God ascending and descending' on the Son of Man." There was a glory in the

lowly Son of Man beyond the Jewish dream of the Messiah as the Son of God, the King of Israel; for He was the Divine Word Incarnate, and their fellowship with Him in the coming days would be like the patriarch's vision of "a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reaching to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it."

Pursuing their journey, they reached Cana in time for the wedding-feast, which was celebrated in the bride's home at the bridegroom's expense. Cf. Jud. xiv. 10. Mary and the rest of her family were among the guests; and since she superintended the entertainment, she was probably a relative of the bridegroom. Plainly they were humble folk, since the feast was but scantily furnished and in the course of it the wine ran done. Solicitous for the host's credit, Mary turned to Jesus. It was natural that she should; for He had been her counsellor and stay all the years of her widowhood. But evidently she now appealed to Him with a peculiar expectancy. And no wonder; for not only had she cherished in her heart the mystery of His birth and the prophecies of His childhood, but tidings of the recent happenings at Bethabara Cf. Lk. ii. 19, 33, 51. must have reached her: would she not hear the story from the five disciples who had arrived in His company, full of wonder and reverence? He had been proclaimed the Messiah, and would He not help in this strait?

She did not ask Him to intervene; she merely told Him of the need: "They have no wine." She addressed Him with the old confidence, and His answer must have surprised and pained her. "What," said



He, "have I to do with you, woman?" So at least our English Version has it; but this is hardly what

Cf. Jud. xl. 12; 2 Sam. xvi. 10, xix. 22; 1 Ki. xvii. 18. He said. His question is a phrase of the Hebrew scriptures, and there it signifies "Why do you trouble me?" What then did He mean? Observe how He styles her

"Woman." It was indeed a courteous address, much like our "Madam"; yet it was strange on the lips of one who had been more than a son to her all those years. It was an intimation to her that

Cf. Mt. xii. 47-50. their old relation was gone, and henceforth He acknowledged no earthly kinship. Her appeal was an alien intrusion; for He had now entered

Cf. Jo. iv. 34, xvii. 4. upon His redemptive ministry, the work which His Father had given Him to do, and His Father's will was His only guide. And

when she accosted Him, He was pondering what that will might be. Even as to the prophets of old, so was it granted to Him in the days of His flesh to work

Lk. xi. 20. miracles "by the finger of God" in attestation of His Messianic mission; and here again

as in the wilderness He was debating whether a fitting occasion had arisen for the exercise of this high prerogative. There He had refused to convert a stone into bread for the relief of His own hunger; and the question now was whether it were befitting that He should create wine for the pleasure of the wedding company. Mary's appeal was an interruption of his anxious thought. "Why are you troubling Me, woman? Not yet has My hour come."

It was not an absolute refusal, and Mary, discomfited but still confident of His intervention, charged the attendants to do whatever He might require. And

presently her hope was fulfilled. Ranged by the doorway were six capacious water-jars, each holding two or three firkins, for the use of ceremonial ablution. They were empty now that they had provided for the double office of the washing of the guests' dusty feet on their arrival and the washing of their hands ere they took their places at table; and Jesus directed the attendants to replenish them. Mindful of Mary's admonition, they "filled them up to the brim." Then He bade them supply thence their empty flagons. It was water that was in the jars, but it was wine in the flagons, and wine of excellent quality. Only the attendants knew of its origin, but when it was served to the guests, they remarked its superiority; and their approbation was voiced by the Master of the Feast—a guest who, according to the ancient fashion, had been chosen by lot to preside. He hailed the bridegroom and merrily bantered him on his departure from general usage. A host's way was to serve his best wine first, and then, when his guests' palates were dulled by much drinking, the inferior stuff. "You," said the Master, "have reserved the good wine until now."

Cf. Lk. vii.  
44; Mk.  
vii. 2, 3.

Such was the miracle which after much perplexity Jesus deemed a fitting inauguration of His miraculous ministry. See wherein it differed from the suggestion in the wilderness that He should convert a stone into bread. First of all, it was a work of compassion: it was wrought for others, not for His own ease. Then it was a true miracle, exhibiting the characteristic which, as we have seen, distinguishes miracle from magic—that, while transcending the normal operation of the laws of nature, it was in line with these. It

was, as the early teachers from St. Irenæus onward observe, a work of the Creator, no subversion of the natural order but merely an acceleration by creative intervention of its accustomed operations. And finally, it served the supreme purpose designed by every miracle which Jesus ever wrought: it "manifested His glory." Had He in the solitude of the wilderness turned a stone into bread for the relief of His own necessity, no eye save His own would have witnessed the marvel; but the turning of the water into wine was witnessed by all the wedding-company, especially His newly won disciples; and by attesting His divine commission it confirmed their faith that He was indeed the Messiah.

THE FIRST YEAR OF HIS MINISTRY



## AT THE PASSOVER

Jo. ii. 12-22 (Mt. xxi. 12, 13 ; Mk. xi. 15~~6~~-17 ;  
Lk. xix. 45, 46), 23-iii. 21.

AFTER the wedding Jesus betook Himself to Capernaum on the north-western shore of the Lake of Galilee, some fifteen miles distant from Cana ; and not only His five disciples but Mary and her sons accompanied Him. It was natural that the four fishermen should go thither, since their homes were at Capernaum ; but what took the others ? Mary and her family dwelt at Nazareth, and Nathanael belonged to Cana. What took them to Capernaum ? It may be inferred from the presence of the four fishermen at the wedding that the bridegroom belonged to Capernaum and they attended as his friends ; and if Mary and her family and Nathanael attended as intimates and perhaps relatives of the bride, it was natural that they should escort her to her new home.

Jesus had another reason for going to Capernaum. He had chosen that busy town as the headquarters of His ministry, and He went thither to arrange for His settlement. He stayed but a few days. It was now the spring of the year 26 A.D., and the Feast of the Passover, falling that year on March 21, was approaching. It was the custom for all devout Israelites to betake themselves to Jerusalem for the holy celebration ; and Jesus presently set forth with His five

disciples on that sacred errand, retracing the route which they had so lately travelled. Ever since His twelfth year He had made the annual pilgrimage; but now He goes up on a high errand—no longer to participate as an ordinary worshipper in the sacred solemnity but to present Himself as the Messiah and claim the faith of the multitude assembled not alone from all the Holy Land but from every country where Jews had their abode.

Immediately on His arrival He found an effective opportunity. The greedy priests, who belonged to the courtly and unpatriotic order of the Sadducees, had, professedly for the convenience of the worshippers but

Cf. Zech.  
xiv. 21  
R.V.

in truth for their own enrichment, instituted and maintained for generations in the outer court of the Temple a market for the sale of sacrificial victims and the exchange of foreign money into the Jewish currency. It was a sordid desecration of the hallowed precincts; and it was widely and keenly resented not alone by the people but by the Pharisees, the guardians of traditional orthodoxy and the jealous rivals of the Sadducean order, and thus a protest against the iniquity was assured of much sympathy. On entering the sacred court Jesus was confronted by the offensive spectacle. Snatching a loose tether, He twisted it into a scourge and drove the cattle from the court. In the confusion the money-changers' tables were overturned and their coins scattered about the pavement. "Take these things hence!" He cried. "Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the reason why the Synoptists place this incident in the Passion-week, cf. *The Days of His Flesh*, p. xxxv.



When the court was cleared, He faced the priests who were standing by discomfited, and indignantly denounced them. "Is it not written," He cried, "'My House shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" Nor would He leave it doubtful what He meant when He styled the Temple "His Father's House." He was "the Son of God." It was a public declaration of His Messiahship; and it disquieted "the Jews," as St. John terms them, meaning after his wont the Jewish rulers representing both the Sadducees and the Pharisees. It revived the perplexity which the Baptist's announcement had already created in their minds. Could this be indeed the Messiah? they asked; and presently they approached Him and craved an attestation of His claim. It was, as we have seen, the general expectation that the Messiah would approve His title by some startling demonstration of His divine commission; and so they asked Him: "What sign do you show us for doing these things?"

It was a repetition of the Tempter's suggestion in the wilderness that He should precipitate Himself from the Pinnacle of the Temple in view of the wondering multitude; and having faced it then, He unhesitatingly rejects it now. He granted a sign indeed, but not the sort of sign they craved. "Demolish this sanctuary," He said, "and in three days I will raise it." It was a cryptic saying. "The Sanctuary" was properly the central shrine, situated in the inner court of the Temple, with its two chambers, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The term in the original signifies "the

habitation" or "dwelling-place," the place of the Divine Presence; and it was figuratively employed of  
 Cf. I. Cor. the body, first as the habitation of the soul and  
 iii. 16, 17, then as the abode of the Indwelling Spirit.  
 vi. 19; 2  
 Cor. vi. 16. It is in this last sense that Jesus here employs  
 it; but the rulers missed His meaning. It seemed  
 to them a wild blasphemy. "Forty and six years,"  
 said they, reckoning from the year 20 B.C. when the  
 building of Herod's Temple was begun, "has this  
 Sanctuary been in the building; and will you raise  
 it in three days?" So His mystic saying was  
 Mt. xxvi. understood by the rulers and even at the  
 61, xxvii.  
 40; Mk. moment by His disciples; and three years  
 xiv. 58, later, when He was arraigned before the  
 xv. 29; cf.  
 Ac. vi. 14. Sanhedrin as a blasphemer, it was alleged  
 against Him.

In truth it was a prophecy of His Death and  
 Resurrection; and it is only one of several evi-  
 Cf. Jo. iii. dences which the Evangelists record that  
 14; Mt. ix. from the very outset of His ministry He  
 14, 15,  
 Mk. ii. 18- had a clear prevision of the road which,  
 20, Lk. v. according to the Scriptures, He must tread.  
 33-35.  
 Lk. xxiv. At every stage of His progress through  
 25-27. the world the shadow of the Cross lay  
 dark and grim upon His path. Calvary was His  
 earthly goal, but beyond it shone the Eternal  
 Glory.

Throughout the sacred week He prosecuted the  
 ministry thus impressively inaugurated. There was  
 scanty accommodation within the narrow limits of  
 the city for the multitude of visitors, and most of  
 them lodged outside. Many camped in the open,  
 and this was the custom of Jesus and His disciples.

Afterwards and perhaps even now His retreat was Gethsemane, an olive-orchard on the slope of Mount Olivet. Thither He retired each evening, and in the morning He would return to the city and employ Himself in the outer court of the Temple, not merely teaching the people who frequented that place of common resort but working miracles among them, especially miracles of healing. These attested His Messianic claim, and it was largely acknowledged. It might seem that He had achieved no small success, but He perceived how truly worthless all that enthusiasm was. It was mere wonderment with no recognition of His spiritual purposes. "Many," says the Evangelist in an epigrammatic sentence, "admitted His title on beholding His signs which He performed ; but on His part Jesus would not commit Himself to them, because He could read every one and had no need of any one's testimony regarding man ; for He could Himself read what was in man."

Mt. xxvi.  
36 ; Mk.  
xiv. 32 ;  
cf. Jo.  
xviii. 1, 2.  
Lk. xxi.  
37, 38.  
Cf. Mt.  
xxi. 14.

Jo. ii. 23-  
25.

The justice of His misgivings was demonstrated by a remarkable incident. Each day that passed increased the perplexity of the rulers, and they determined to seek another interview with Jesus. They might have approached Him in the Temple-court ; but, unwilling to compromise themselves, they rather deputed one of their number to confer with Him privately. Their choice fell upon Nicodemus, a venerable Scribe or Rabbi, a member of the learned order of the Pharisees whose business was the conservation and interpretation of the Sacred Law. To ensure secrecy he waited till nightfall and sought Him under cover of darkness in His retreat on the mountainside.

Picture the scene : the deep, blue, starlit sky overhead ; the solemn stillness broken only by the rustle of the breeze among the leaves of the orchard ; the venerable Teacher of Israel and the young Galilean peasant face to face and the wondering disciples in the background. With studious courtesy Nicodemus unfolded his errand. " Rabbi," he began, according Him that honourable title which His fame as a teacher merited, " we know "—my colleagues and I—" that you are a teacher come from God ; for no one can perform the signs which you perform unless God be with him."

Of so much they were persuaded : Jesus was " a teacher come from God." But might He not be more ? Did not His miracles prove Him the Messiah, come to establish " the Kingdom of God " ? That was the question which was perplexing the rulers, and Nicodemus would have presented it ; but Jesus interrupted him. " Verily, verily I tell you "—you yourself—" unless one be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." This was the vital issue—each man's personal relation to God and His quickening grace.

Here Jesus employs a word which bears in the original a double signification, either " from above " or " anew." It was the former sense that He intended—" born from above " ; but the idea was strange to Nicodemus, and he took the word in the latter sense. " Born anew " : what could this mean ? It seemed an absurdity. " How can a man be born when he is old ? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born ? "

Jesus patiently explained. " Verily, verily I tell

you, unless one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." The reference here is to the Baptist's message which of late had stirred the nation and troubled the rulers. His requirement was "repentance for remission of sins." Repentance procured forgiveness, Mk. i. 4. and to the penitent he administered his rite of Baptism in token that they were forgiven. At the same time he recognised and proclaimed the limitation of his ministry. It was merely a preparation for the better ministry of the Coming Saviour. He required repentance and pronounced the absolution of every sinner who truly turned to God; but mere repentance and absolution of the past do not constitute a full salvation. For what avails it that we have been "purged from our old sins" unless our hearts and their affections have been so renewed that we shall henceforth hate sin and have done with it? This is the work of the Holy Spirit, and John had promised that the blessed secret would be revealed when the Saviour came. He would institute a better Baptism—a Baptism which included in its gracious symbolism repentance and remission but added thereto that inward operation which makes the sinner a new creature. "I baptise you with water, but He who is coming Mt. iii. 11. after me will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire"—the flame of divine love which burns sin out of the soul as the refiner's fire burns the dross out of the silver.

This is a full salvation—repentance, forgiveness, and renewal; and this is what Jesus meant when He defined "born anew" as "born of water and the Spirit." It was a spiritual experience, and after the

manner which He loved and practised so largely in after days, He illustrated it by a parable. In Jewish speech the same word, properly "breath," signified both "wind" and "spirit"; and as they sat, the soft, sweet breeze was stirring the leafage and fanning their brows. There was an image of the operation of heavenly grace. "Do not wonder," said He, "at My telling you, 'You must all be born anew.' The breath breathes where it will; and you hear the sound of it, but you know not whence it comes and where it goes. So is it with every one who has been born of the Breath."

It was lost upon Nicodemus. "How can this be?" he murmured in bewilderment; and his dulness disappointed Jesus. If a Rabbi were so blind to the spiritual significance of familiar experience, so incapable of grasping the very rudiments of His revelation, what would the common folk make of the transcendent truths which He had yet to proclaim? Still He persisted, and discoursed at length, not to Nicodemus alone but to His disciples as well, of the high ends of His mission. Even the disciples would understand little at the moment, but His words lived in their remembrance and experience illumined them ever more clearly. He spoke of the world perishing like the Israelites when they were bitten by the serpents in the wilderness, and of the errand on which He had come—an errand not of judgment but of mercy. As Moses had lifted the brazen serpent in sight of the perishing people and all who looked at it were healed, so God of His infinite love had sent Him into the world that every one who believed in Him might not perish but have eternal life. And He spoke

Cf. Eccl.  
xi. 5  
R.V.

Num. xxi.  
6-9.



finally of the responsibility which His message imposed on all who should hear it. The dawn was breaking, and here He found another parable. "This is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness more than the light."



## ON THE ROAD TO CAPERNAUM

Jo. iii. 22-iv. 2. Mt. xiv. 3-5 ; Mk. vi. 17-20 ; Lk. iii. 19, 20.

Jo. iv. 3-54.

AT the close of the sacred week Jesus and His disciples took their departure. They quitted the busy capital, but they did not meanwhile quit the Judæan territory ; and it is hardly doubtful what their destination was. It was surely Bethabara down by the Jordan where Jesus had heard the heavenly call ; and He returned thither that, ere beginning His Galilean ministry, He might revive the hallowed memory and renew His consecration. The place was no longer thronged by an eager multitude ; for the Baptist had left it and was now prosecuting his ministry at Ænon, " The Springs," near the village of Salim and, on the testimony of St. Jerome, fully seven miles south of Scythopolis.

He was denied the seclusion which He craved ; for it soon transpired at Jerusalem where He was, and the citizens thronged after Him until He was surrounded by a larger crowd than had ever waited on the Baptist. He would preach to them ; and to all who professed faith His disciples, who in at least two instances had been John's disciples, naturally administered their former master's rite of Baptism—an evidence that the place was indeed Bethabara, since nowhere else in that arid country was there a sufficiency of

water. Jesus permitted it, since He recognised the salutary significance of His forerunner's Baptism of Repentance; but He took no part in the administration, since He intended a nobler sacrament and would ordain it so soon as He had revealed its richer grace.

For a full month He prosecuted this ministry, and He might have continued it longer but for two emergencies. One was that His activities attracted the attention of the Pharisees, and He had no mind for a renewal of their vexatious interference. The other was the grievous intelligence of the Baptist's arrest by Herod Antipas, that crafty, cruel, and licentious tyrant who since the division of the kingdom of his father Herod the Great had ruled under the title of Tetrarch over the districts of Galilee and Peræa. Ænon lay near the southern frontier of Galilee, and according to the Jewish historian the crowds which resorted thither had inspired him with the dread of a popular insurrection; but this was neither his sole nor his main motive. He had recently divorced his wife, a daughter of the Arabian king Aretas, and espoused Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Philip and a daughter of their half-brother Aristobulus; and John had confronted him and denounced the iniquity. He had quailed before the stern prophet, but Herodias was indignant. She urged the Baptist's instant execution, and Antipas had compromised by conveying him to his castle of Machærûs to the east of the Dead Sea and immuring him there.

There were two routes between Judæa and Galilee. One ran through Peræa along the eastern side of the

Jordan, and not only was this the shorter route from Bethabara to Capernaum but it was safer. For the other lay through Samaria; and between the Jews and the Samaritans there was an ancient and bitter feud. After the Assyrian conquest of the northern Kingdom of Israel about the year 720 B.C. Cf. 2 Ki. xvii. the devastated country was peopled by Assyrian settlers who intermarried with the Israelitish survivors, and the Samaritans were their descendants. At the Restoration in 536 B.C. they claimed kinship with the returned exiles and would have co-operated with them in rebuilding the Temple; but Cf. Ezr. iv. their overtures were scornfully rejected, and the quarrel persisted. The Samaritans built a rival Temple on Mount Gerizim; and though they acknowledged the Pentateuch, practised the Mosaic ceremonial, and observed the sacred feasts, tracing their Cf. Jo. iv. 12. descent from Joseph and calling Jacob their father, the Jews esteemed them heretics, more unclean than the Gentiles. A fierce and lawless race, they were swift to retaliate, insulting and maltreating Jewish travellers. It was unsafe Cf. Lk. ix. 51-56. for defenceless wayfarers to pass through Samaria; yet perilous and circuitous though it was, Jesus chose the western route inasmuch as it skirted Ænon and He would learn there what had befallen the Baptist and perhaps encounter some of his distressed followers.

He set out with His disciples early in the morning and, travelling hard, by 6 o'clock that evening<sup>1</sup> they had accomplished some thirty miles and were approaching Sychar, the modern *'Askar*. Less robust

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 44.

than the others, He was sorely fatigued. Within a mile of the town there was a well reputed to have been dug by the patriarch Jacob and known to this day as "Jacob's Well"; and on reaching it He sank down exhausted on the low wall enclosing it, and His companions left Him resting there and proceeded to the town to purchase food. It was a peaceful spot on the bosom of that fertile upland now known as the Plain of *Mukhna* or "The Cornfields," stretching westward as far as Shechem (*Nablus*) and enclosed on the south by Mount Gerizim and on the north by Mount Ebal. On the rich, warm Plain of Gennesaret, upwards of 600 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, the crops were ripe by the beginning of April, early enough, when the Passover fell late, for the unleavened bread to be baked with the new flour; but on that cool upland over 1500 feet above sea-level the Cf. Jo. iv. harvest-time was toward the close of May, 35. and the surrounding fields were now clothed with golden grain ready for the sickle.

There was abundance of water at Sychar but, issuing from the calcareous base of Mount Ebal, it was hard, and then as now the folk would visit the distant Well and fetch home pitcherfuls of the sweet, cool, healthful water which its deep spring supplied. It was woman's work, and it was done at eventide; and as Jesus sat there, a woman approached with Cf. Gen. her pitcher. What would have happened had xxiv. 11. He been an ordinary Jew? It was accounted unseemly for a Jew to "multiply discourse" with a woman, even his own wife or sister or daughter; and this was not merely a woman but a Samaritan woman and, moreover, as her manner and her unbound hair

proclaimed, a sinful woman, though in truth "more sinn'd against than sinning." For in those days the marriage-law bore cruelly upon women. It permitted a husband to divorce his wife "for any reason," were it only that he was tired of her or fancied another woman more. She might remarry and have several husbands in the course of her life, but too often in the long run she was driven to a life of shame. So it had happened with this poor soul. Five times she had been married and as often divorced, and now she was a concubine. An ordinary Jew would have shrunk aside at her approach; but Jesus accosted her and conversed with her. They were all alone. None of the disciples heard what passed between them; and if it be asked whence the Evangelist derived the story, surely the answer is that he heard it afterwards from her own lips.

On arriving she fastened the cord to her pitcher and let it down into the well, and as she drew it up brimming and dripping, the thirsty wayfarer eyed it longingly, and as she was lifting it to place it on her head, He begged a draught. Like Rebekah of old she would "let it down on her hand" and raise it to His lips. It was kindly done, yet after the fashion of her sort she could not refrain from impudent banter: "How is it that you, though you be a Jew, ask a drink from me, though I be a woman, a Samaritan?" Here was the opportunity which He desired. Water, so precious in the East, was called "the gift of God"; and in it as in every earthly thing He recognised a heavenly parable. "If," He answered, "you knew 'the gift of God' and who it is that says to you 'Give Me a drink,' you would

Cf. Mt.  
xix. 3.  
Cf. Gen.  
xxiv. 17,  
18.

have asked Him and He would have given you living water." In common speech "living water" was the running water of a spring or stream in contrast with the standing water of a pool or cistern. What could He mean? "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then have you the 'living water'? Are you greater," she laughed, "than our father Jacob who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" Unheeding her ridicule, He made yet another attempt to convey the truth to her mind: "Every one that drinks of this water will thirst again; but one who drinks of the water which I will give him, shall never thirst. No, the water which I will give him will become within him a well of water springing to eternal life." This is like the precept of the Philosophic Emperor: "Look within. Within is the well of good; and evermore will it bubble up if evermore you dig." Surely His meaning was plain, yet it was lost upon her. It seemed to her a sheer absurdity. "Sir," she sneered, "give me this water, that I may not thirst or come all the way here to draw."

Finding her thus inaccessible to gentle dealing, He took a sterner way. He assailed her conscience. "Go," said He abruptly, "call your husband, and come here." This checked her ridicule. She flushed and stammered out "I have no husband." "Finely spoken!" He retorted. "Here you have told the truth";<sup>1</sup> and beneath the scrutiny of His deep, searching gaze she "trembled like a guilty thing

<sup>1</sup> This is probably all He actually said (vers. 17, 18), and the woman in reporting the conversation particularised the sin which He had brought home to her.



surprised." Her conscience took His part against her. Her shameful past rose up before her, and she realised that she had to do with One who knew the plague of her heart.

Still she would not yield, and cleverly essayed to evade the issue by raising the old religious quarrel. "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped at this mountain, and you say that at Jerusalem is the place where it is right to worship." He brushed the subterfuge aside. "Believe Me, woman, that an hour is coming when neither at this mountain nor at Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews. But an hour is coming, it is already here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for it is such that the Father is seeking for His worshippers. God is spirit, and His worshippers must worship in spirit and truth." It was a personal appeal, a gracious invitation to the poor sinner to turn in penitence and faith to the Father whose wide mercy embraces all the children of men; but she held back. Sychar was only some fifteen miles distant from Ænon, and of late all that district had been ringing with the Baptist's announcement of the Messiah's advent. Surely it would be time enough for decision when He appeared. "I know," said she, "that Messiah is coming. When He comes, He will tell us all about it." "I am He," said Jesus—"I who am talking to you."

Just then the disciples arrived on the scene. It surprised them to find the Master "talking with a woman," and such a woman. They would look askance



at her, but ere they could utter a word she was gone. Forgetting her pitcher, she sped home across the fields to tell the tidings. His look refrained them from remonstrance, and they produced the food which they had purchased ; but He would have none of it. " I have food to eat," said He, " which you know nothing of." They whispered to each other, wondering if some one, perhaps the woman, had brought Him food, until He added : " My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and accomplish His work."

What was it that had so moved Him ? His recent experience at Jerusalem augured ill for the success of His ministry. Truly in sowing the good seed of the Kingdom He had need to emulate the husbandman who " waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it." But His interview with that poor sinner at Jacob's Well had cheered Him with the vision of a brighter prospect. " Have you not a saying, ' Yet four months, and then the harvest ' ? Look, I tell you ! Lift up your eyes and behold the fields that they are white for harvest." The wondering disciples looked, and what did they see ? Not merely the expanse of golden cornfields but an eager throng approaching from the town. The woman had published her discovery. " Come," was her cry, " see a man who told me everything I had done ! Surely this is the Messiah." At another time the idea might have been derided, but now it chimed with the Baptist's message, and the townsfolk hastened forth to see the wonderful Stranger.

Doubtless His intention had been to continue His journey that evening to Ænon, but it would be late ere He had done discoursing to the eager throng, and,

yielding to their importunities, He not only spent the night at Sychar but remained there for two days, winning a rich harvest of faith. It was a cheering experience. After all it was no wonder that Cf. Mt. xxiii. 37; Lk. xiii. 33. He had achieved so little at Jerusalem, for there, where they should have been welcomed, the prophets had always been evil entreated; and surely his success at Sychar was an augury of still greater success in Galilee.

He went forward on His journey with uplifted heart. There was now no need for Him to visit Ænon, since He had learned at Sychar what had befallen the Baptist; and He betook Himself to the nearest frontier of Galilee some fifteen miles distant. No sooner had He crossed it than He was enthusiastically greeted. The Galileans who had attended the Pass-over two months ago had carried home a report of His miracles in the Holy City; and as He passed on His way, the people thronged about Him in eager curiosity. Their acclamations pleased Him ill. For what did it mean? It was His message that had won the faith of the Samaritans; but it was His miracles that appealed to those Galileans, and their enthusiasm bespoke no recognition of His spiritual purposes.

The direct route to Capernaum lay along the western shore of the Lake, but He kept to the uplands that He might pass by Cana, the home of Nathanael and the scene of His first miracle. It was nearly forty miles distant from Sychar; and, retarded by the popular enthusiasm, His progress would be slow. It would be the second day ere He arrived; and meanwhile tidings of His approach had been carried to

Capernaum and had reached the ears of a public official there. The Evangelist styles him "a nobleman" or "king's officer," meaning a superintendent of the state revenue; and it is a reasonable surmise that he was Chuza, the steward of Herod Antipas, whose wife Joanna afterwards gratefully "ministered of her substance" to Jesus and His disciples. His little son was dying of the fever so prevalent about the Lake; and hope was kindled in his breast when he heard that the wonder-working Teacher was so near. He hurried to Cana, some fifteen miles off; and getting there at seven o'clock, he begged Him to return with him and heal his child.

R.V. marg.

Cf. Lk.  
viii. 3.

Weary as He was of the unspirituality of the multitudes that had beset His progress through Galilee, so intent on His miracles, so heedless of His grace, the request jarred upon Jesus. "Unless," said He, ignoring the suppliant and addressing the curious bystanders, "you see signs and wonders, you will never believe." What cared the anxious father for signs and wonders? His child was dying, and Jesus could save him. There was no time to lose. "Sir," he cried, "come down ere my child die!" It was a cry of human anguish, and it gained a response beyond his hope. "Go," said Jesus; "your son lives." He accepted the assurance and hastened homeward. On the way some of his people met him with the joyful tidings of the child's recovery. "When did he take the turn?" he inquired. "Yesterday at seven o'clock" was the answer. So the promise of Jesus had been fulfilled, and His mercy won that whole household—the first-fruits of His ministry at Capernaum.

## BEGINNINGS AT CAPERNAUM

Mt. iv. 12-22 ; Mk. i. 14-20 ; Lk. iv. 14, 15, v. 1-11. Mk. i. 21, 22 ;  
Lk. iv. 31, 32 ; Mt. v. 17-30 (Lk. xii. 58, 59), 33-39a, vi. 1-8,  
16-18, vii. 28, 29. Mk. i. 23-34 ; Lk. iv. 33-41 ; Mt. viii. 14-17.

PRESENTLY Jesus appeared at Capernaum, the chosen headquarters of His earthly ministry. It is not a little surprising that the precise situation of a town so important in its day and so dear to the Christian heart is now unknown. It lay on the north-west of the Lake, but whether at *Tell Hum* some two and a half miles from the debouchure of the upper Jordan or at *Khan Minyeh* some two miles farther on is undetermined, though the balance of probability inclines perhaps to the latter site. The town seems to have stood somewhat back from the shore, but it was linked to the Lake by the fisher-folk's quarter of

Cf. Jo. xii. 21. Bethsaida or "Fisherton"—"Bethsaida of Galilee" as it was designated to distinguish it from Bethsaida Julias near the head of the Lake on the eastern side of the Jordan. Known of old as the Sea of Chinnereth, and by and by, from the beautiful capital which Herod Antipas built himself on the western shore, as the Sea of Tiberias, it was called in our Lord's day the Sea of Galilee or the Lake of Gennesaret. Gennesaret, "Garden of Princes," was a fertile plain skirting the north-western shore ; and it was on this pleasant champaign that Capernaum stood.

The Lake measured some thirteen miles by seven or eight, and its sweet water swarmed with fish of excellent quality. Fishing was the principal industry and brought Capernaum much of its prosperity, though not all of it. For the town stood on "The Way of the Sea," the busy route between Damascus and the ports of the Levant; and being the frontier-station of Galilee, it did a large business in the collection of customs and was occupied by a military garrison.

It was indeed an effective arena for the Lord's ministry; and since His fame had preceded Him thither, He found an expectant audience. He discoursed to the crowds which followed Him, but preaching was not His sole nor His chief concern. From the outset He recognised that His time on earth would be short and His work would fall to the ground unless on His departure there were fit hands to take it up and carry it forward. And so His purpose was to gather about Him a band of devoted men who had evinced their aptitude for so sacred a trust and who would cast in their lot with Him and by continual fellowship with Him in the service of the Kingdom of Heaven gain an ever deeper initiation into its mysteries. There were four, all fishermen, whose suitability He had already ascertained. Three of them belonged to the company of disciples whom He had won at Bethabara—the brothers Simon and Andrew and their friend John; and the fourth was the latter's elder brother James. And no sooner had He settled at Capernaum than He called them to their high service.

It was morning, and He sought them at the harbour where the fishermen beached their boats after the

night's fishing. On the way thither He was beset by a throng of people who in their eagerness to hear Him so crowded about Him that He was in danger of being thrust into the Lake. Hard by two boats were standing by the margin, one belonging to Simon and Andrew and the other to James and John. They had just returned from the fishing ground; but it had been a clear night, which, as Pliny tells us, was bad for fishing, and they had come ashore with empty nets. And now they were preparing for the next night's venture. Simon and Andrew were washing Cf. Lk. v. 2; Mk. i. 16; Mt. iv. 18. their nets, "tossing them in the sea" to rinse them clear of mud and weeds; while James and John with their father Zebedee were seated in their boat mending theirs. Simon's boat was the nearest besides being unoccupied, and Jesus stepped over to it and, getting into it, requested the brothers to push it off a little way. And sitting in it He discoursed to the multitude on the beach.

When He had done discoursing, He bade Simon put out to deep water and shoot his nets. It seemed to the fishermen a useless attempt now that it was broad day; but it was the Master that spoke, and they obeyed, and to their astonishment no sooner were their nets out than they were filled. So heavy was the take that they could not draw the nets without tearing them. They signalled to James and John to put off to their assistance, and both the boats were loaded to the very gunwale.

The disciples had witnessed other miracles of Jesus more wonderful than this, but this specially appealed to them. It was so alien from all their experience. "Depart from me," cried Simon, kneeling down before



Him, "for I am a sinful man, Lord." It was more than wonder; it was worship—the earliest recognition of the Lord's more than human dignity. Simon's thought was that the fellowship which had begun at Bethabara must now end, but Jesus reassured him. It was not the end of their fellowship but the beginning of a closer intimacy. Hitherto Simon's work had been catching fish and catching them to die, but henceforth it would be catching men and catching them to live. "Fear not! From this day forth you will take men to preserve them alive." "Nets," says Bunyan, "are truly instruments of death, but the net of the gospel doth catch to draw from death. They are catched from death, and hell, catched to live with God in glory."

R.V.  
marg.; cf.  
Num.  
xxx. 15;  
Josh. vi.  
25 LXX.

The laden boats returned to the harbour. "Come after Me," said Jesus to Simon and Andrew, "and I will make you fishers of men." They obeyed; and passing to the other boat, He addressed the same call to James and John. They too obeyed, and they all left their boats and nets and from that hour devoted themselves to the service of their Master and His Kingdom.

It seems that Jesus shared Simon's home at Bethsaida. It was no poor hut but the decent house of a thriving fisherman; and since it belonged also to his brother Andrew, it had probably been bequeathed to them by their father John. They both inhabited it; nor were they its sole inmates, for Simon had a wife and her mother dwelt with them. It is surely an evidence of their common devotion to the Master that

Cf. Mk. i.  
29.  
Cf. Jo. i.  
42, xxi.  
15-17  
R.V.; Mt.  
xvi. 17.



they found room for Him beneath their hospitable roof.

The Sabbath Day came round, and Jesus in company with His two hosts and their neighbours James and John repaired to the synagogue in Capernaum. There were two meetings for public worship on the Sabbath, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon ; and, as the sequel proves, it was the latter that Jesus now attended. It was the custom that, when a Cf. Ac. xii. 15. qualified visitor appeared in a Jewish synagogue, he should be invited to address the congregation ; and of course the customary invitation was extended to Jesus. The incident is recorded by Mk. i. 22 ; St. Mark and St. Luke, but they have furnished no report of His sermon, merely noting cf. Mt. vii. 28, 29. the profound impression which it created. Happily, however, it is not lost.<sup>1</sup> The peculiar value of the Gospel according to St. Matthew is the fulness of its record of our Lord's teaching ; and that extensive discourse which is commonly known as " the Sermon on the Mount " and which the Evangelist has placed at the beginning of his narrative as a sort of frontispiece illustrating the manner of the Heavenly Teacher, is in truth not a single discourse but, as appears by comparison with the other Gospels, a mosaic of discourses which the Lord delivered on diverse occasions. And it includes much of this His sermon in the synagogue of Capernaum.

In a Jewish synagogue the sermon followed the Ac. xiii. 15. scripture lessons, " the Reading of the Law and the Prophets." Two passages were read as prescribed by the Lectionary, one from the Book

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Days of His Flesh*, pp. xx f.

of the Law and the other from the Prophets ; and the preacher took his text from one or other of these. The sacred roll was handed to him, and he read over his text, standing the while in token of reverence for Holy Writ ; then he returned Cf. Lk. iv. 16, 17, 20. the roll to the attendant, seated himself, and so discoursed to the congregation. "Think not," Jesus began, "that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to destroy but to fulfil." He was the Messiah, and He had come to achieve the salvation which the ordinances of the Law prefigured and establish the Kingdom of righteousness and peace which the Prophets had foretold ; and He proceeded to illustrate the difference which He had made by quoting precept after precept from the ancient Law and showing the larger and deeper significance wherewith He invested each.

"You have heard that it was said to the men of old : 'Thou shalt do no murder' ; but I tell you, every one who hates his brother is a murderer." It is the evil thought that Ex. xx. 13. prompts the evil deed, and it is in the thought, though exempt from legal cognisance, that the guilt lies. Be merely angry with your brother, and in God's sight you are even as the culprit who is arraigned before the local justiciary. Pass from anger to scorn, ejaculating *raka*, "faugh !" and in thus disdaining a brother made in His image you are, in God's sight, even as the blasphemer arraigned before the Council of the Sanhedrin. Pass from scorn to abuse : call your brother "fool !" and in God's sight you are even as those vile criminals who suffer the ignominious doom

of crucifixion and whose bodies are cast into Gehenna, "the Valley of Hinnom," that loathsome den outside the southern wall of Jerusalem, the repository of the city's refuse.

Again, "you have heard that it was said to the men of old: 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'; but I tell you that the thought, the look of lust is even as the deed."

Again, "you have heard that it was said to the men of old: 'Thou shalt not swear falsely' but 'shalt render to the Lord thine oaths'; but I tell you never to swear an oath at all."

Be true in heart, and your word is enough: it requires no attestation.

It is the thought that counts; and He proceeded to enforce this truth by a keen satire on the Pharisaism of His day, stigmatising it as "hypocrisy," which signified properly "play-acting." "Beware," said He, "of doing your righteousness before men that you may be a spectacle to them." And then He adduced three examples. First He spoke of Almsgiving, that

gracious office so largely enjoined by the Scriptures, and depicted the manner of "the play-actors"—how in proverbial phrase they "sounded a trumpet before them" or, as the Greeks put it, "blew their own pipes," ostentatiously dropping their coins into the poor-box in the synagogue or into the outstretched hands of the beggars in the street. Then He spoke of Prayer, and pictured them timing themselves to be abroad at the hour of prayer that they might strike the attitude of devotion at the street-corners. And finally He spoke of Fasting. Fasts were appointed on special

Cf. Lev.  
xix. 9, 10;  
Dt. xv.  
7-11; Ps.  
xli. 1-3;  
Pr. xxi.  
13.

R.V. marg.  
Ex. xx. 14.

Lev. xix.  
12; Num.  
xxx. 2.

occasions, as times of war or pestilence or famine ; but the Pharisees voluntarily fasted twice a week, each Monday and Thursday, and went about in penitential guise, barefoot, with ashes sprinkled on their heads and mournful countenances, "making their faces unsightly that they might be a sight to men in their fasting." Cf. Lk. xviii. 12.

The discourse startled the hearers. What chiefly impressed them was the note of "authority" which rang in every sentence. It was so unlike the manner of their Scribes, those servile traditionalists who pre-faced their every doctrine with the formula "Rabbi So-and-so said." They listened with breathless attention, but when He ceased, the stillness was broken by a wild shriek—"A-a-h!" It came from an unhappy creature known in those days as "a demoniac." Every sort of malady, physical, mental, and moral—especially madness with its wild raving and epilepsy with its writhing and foaming—was then, among Jews and pagans alike, ascribed to the obsession of a malignant spirit. It was a natural consequence of the belief that, since the sufferers themselves entertained it, they exhibited a sort of dual personality, speaking now in their own proper character and now in that of the spirit wherewith they supposed themselves possessed. "This species of double consciousness makes wild work with the patient's imagination, and, judiciously used, is perhaps a frequent means of restoring sanity of intellect. Exterior circumstances striking the senses often have a powerful effect in undermining or battering the airy castles which the disorder has created."

It was thus that Jesus always dealt with the

demoniacs whom He encountered. This was a case of epilepsy—possession by “an unclean spirit.” The man fell foaming and writhing on the floor. He recognised Jesus as the Messiah, the enemy of the powers of evil, and, speaking in the person of the demon which possessed him, he deprecated His vengeance on the hellish race. “Why,” he raved, “are you troubling us, Jesus the Nazarene? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” Like a wise physician, Jesus “soothed him in these contraries, and, yielding to him, humoured well his frenzy.” “Be muzzled,” said He, addressing the supposed spirit as though it were a furious beast, “and come out of him.” The authority of His tone and bearing mastered the distraught mind, and after a violent paroxysm and a wild cry the man lay still. Persuaded that the spirit had quitted him, he was delivered from his hallucination. Nor was this all. Not only was his frenzy soothed but his malady was healed.

Leaving the synagogue, Jesus and His disciples returned to Bethsaida, and James and John went home with the others to Simon's house for supper. On arriving they found that Simon's mother-in-law had sickened of the malaria so prevalent in the sultry environs of the Lake, lying as it does in a hillgirt basin 682 feet below sea-level. It was a severe attack, and they appealed to Jesus. He approached the couch and, grasping the sufferer's hand, raised her. Her recovery was instantaneous and complete. There was no lingering weakness, no protracted convalescence, and she immediately resumed her domestic offices and served the table.

Meanwhile the story of the miracle in the synagogue had gone abroad, and it enkindled hope in many an afflicted home. The Rabbinical law prohibited all manner of work on the Sabbath ; but the sacred day ended, according to the Jewish reckoning, at six o'clock, and no sooner had the sun set than Simon's house was besieged by an importunate crowd. All who had sick folk conveyed them thither, and their curious neighbours accompanied them, until " the whole city was assembled at the door." Jesus received them graciously and passed from sufferer to sufferer, laying His kind hand on each and healing them all.



## A RETREAT INLAND

Mk. i. 35-45 ; Lk. iv. 42-44, v. 12-16 ; Mt. iv. 23-25, viii. 2-4.

It had been a hard day, and Jesus would be weary when He sought His couch. Yet He could not rest. He was troubled by the commotion which His miracles had excited. For what did it mean? His miracles had persuaded the people that He was indeed the Messiah ; and this would have been well had they truly interpreted His Messiahship. But they conceived of the Messiah as a political deliverer ; and already He had perceived the mischievousness of this secular ideal and its menace to the recognition of His spiritual purposes. That evening while He healed the sick folk, the multitude had acclaimed Him the Son of God, the Christ, and He had sought to restrain their enthusiasm ; but He knew how unavailing His remonstrance would prove. And so He resolved that He would withdraw from Capernaum for a season until the excitement should subside, and make a circuit of Galilee, publishing His Gospel in the inland towns and villages.

It was an important departure, and first, as He was wont throughout His ministry, He would take counsel with His Father in prayer. There was no seclusion in that narrow and crowded dwelling, and He left His couch ere daybreak and, stealing out of doors, betook Himself to " a solitary place," probably some retreat on the hillside behind the town.



In the morning He was missed, and the disciples went in search of Him. The alarm spread, and the neighbours joined in the quest. At length they found Him. "They are all seeking you" cried the disciples, expecting that He would hasten back and resume the ministry which seemed to them so successful. But He told them of His resolution: "Let us away elsewhere to the adjoining country-towns, that I may preach there too. It was for this that I came out here."

They travelled inland. Since He had already traversed southern Galilee on His way from the Pass-over and preached there the following year on the occasion of another retreat inland, He would now visit the midland and the north. It was a populous region thickly strewn with towns and villages, including Sepphoris, Jotapata, Iron, Hazor, Gischala, and Chorazin, and in the course of His circuit He would accomplish an extensive mission. He preached in the synagogues, finding there an ample opportunity, since the congregations assembled not only twice on the Sabbath but on the second day of the week (Monday) and again on the fifth (Thursday). And wherever in streets and fields the people gathered round Him, He discoursed to them and healed their sicknesses.

Every day was crowded with beneficent activities; and the same misjudging enthusiasm which had driven Him from Capernaum, increasingly embarrassed Him until at length it brought His mission to Cf. Lev. xiii. 38-46. an abrupt close. Of all the maladies afflicting the peoples of the East leprosy was then, as it still is, the most grievous. Being incurable by human

skill, it was accounted a visitation of God, remediable only by His miraculous mercy. It was a loathsome disease, "so noisome," says Maundrell, "that it might well pass for the utmost Corruption of the Human Body on this side the Grave." Its initial symptom was a reddish-white scar, and immediately it appeared the victim knew that he was doomed. He was reckoned as already dead. For a while he was unrestricted, but as the malady ran its course his flesh became one putrid mass and he was excluded from human intercourse. He had to go with rent garments, bare head, unkempt hair, and muffled mouth, crying "Unclean ! unclean !" to give warning of his approach.

In "one of the cities" there was a leper—"full of leprosy" as St. Luke the physician observes. He had heard the fame of Jesus, and His arrival in the town kindled hope in his breast. All day long, as the Divine Healer went about teaching the people and laying His hand on the sick, the forlorn creature would watch Him from afar, fain, had he dared, to approach Him and entreat His mercy ; and when evening fell, he lingered about the door of His lodging until he could restrain himself no longer. No one was by, and he daringly entered and, kneeling before Him, cried : "Lord, if you will, you can cleanse me." Who, though ever so pitiful, would not have shrunk away from that sickening form ? It was reckoned pollution for a Jew to come within six feet of a leper ; and it is told of one Rabbi that, when he saw a leper, he hid himself, and of another that, when he saw one, he would pelt him with stones. But the Lord's compassion conquered even His natural loathing, and He reached out His

hand and not merely "touched him" but, as the word employed by all the three Evangelists signifies, "grasped him." "I will," said He: "be cleansed." And instantly health flushed through the diseased frame, and the rotting flesh was sweet and fair.

Swift as the cure was the change which passed over our Lord's bearing. "He frowned upon him, and immediately expelled him," bidding him without a word about the miracle hasten away to Jerusalem and, in accordance with the legal requirement, present himself for priestly examination in the Temple. What did He mean? It lay with the priest to pronounce a leper clean, and unless the legal ordinance were respected, it would seem as though Jesus were deliberately violating it, and thus He would needlessly offend the already suspicious rulers. And moreover, were it divulged, so striking a miracle would intensify the popular enthusiasm. It had been wrought in privacy, and if the man forthwith quitted the town, it would remain a secret and He might continue His ministry unembarrassed.

Mk. i. 43.

Cf. Lev.  
xiv. 1-32.

His admonition was disregarded. No sooner was the man out of doors than, unable to contain himself, he told the story and it was noised abroad. The enthusiasm was boundless, insomuch that Jesus had to quit the town. Everywhere He went the fame of it had preceded Him, and He retreated to the solitude of the open country and took counsel with God in prayer. It was impossible for Him to continue His mission, and He turned His steps homeward and made His way back to Capernaum.

## BACK IN CAPERNAUM

Mk. ii. 1 ; Mt. viii. 5-10, 13 ; Lk. vii. 1-10. Mt. viii. 19-22 ;  
Lk. ix. 57-62.

So extensive a mission would occupy a considerable time, and it was probably toward the close of summer when He returned to Capernaum. The excitement created by His brief ministry had subsided on His departure, but a lively interest had been sustained by reports of His doings in the inland towns ; and on His reappearance at Bethsaida the report spread " He is home ! "

It was good news, and none welcomed it more gladly than a centurion in the garrison. He was a Gentile, but, like that other centurion, Cornelius of Cæsarea, he belonged to a class known as " the God-fearers " or " the devout " —earnest heathen who in that age when the old polytheisms had fallen into discredit, had been attracted by the lofty monotheism and pure ethic of the Jewish faith. The ceremonial law repelled them and they remained uncircumcised, but they revered the Scriptures and attached themselves to the Synagogue, sharing its worship and displaying an exemplary devotion and often a generous liberality. Such was Cornelius, and such also was this centurion of Capernaum. Not merely had he earned the esteem of the Jewish community but he had laid it under a debt of gratitude by building it a synagogue.

It is an evidence of the centurion's goodness that in an age when slaves were so barbarously treated, he had a slave whom he dearly loved—a faithful retainer who had won his master's gratitude by some devoted service, perhaps, as in several recorded instances, the saving of his life in battle at the risk of his own. The old man had been stricken with palsy, and the centurion on hearing of the Lord's return coveted His aid. With the modesty of a simple-hearted gentleman he shrank from direct solicitation and enlisted the mediation of the Jewish Elders. They obsequiously undertook their benefactor's commission and, hastening to Bethsaida, somewhat haughtily stated their errand. "He deserves that you should do him this service," said they; "for he loves our nation, and it was he that built us the synagogue."

Jesus at once accompanied them, attended by a curious crowd. Meanwhile, however, the centurion had bethought himself. No doubt he had Cf. Lk. vii. heard the story of his neighbour the noble-<sup>9</sup> man—how Jesus at Cana fifteen miles away had healed his child lying sick at Capernaum. Surely there was no need for Him to visit his house; and, ashamed of his thoughtlessness, he dispatched some friends hard after the Elders to repair the blunder. So promptly had Jesus responded to the first appeal that He was near the house ere they met Him. They delivered the centurion's message, and very different it was from the cavalier demand of the Elders. "Lord," it ran, "I am not fit that you should enter under my roof. Just say the word, and my slave will be healed. For I am a man under authority with soldiers under myself; and I say to this one 'Go' and he goes,

and to another 'Come' and he comes, and to my slave 'Do this' and he does it." It was a soldier's idea. He conceived Jesus as the supreme commander of the heavenly host, Lord of the angels, those ministers of His who did His pleasure. Crude though it was, the thought revealed a high and reverent faith, and He was surprised and gladdened to find it in a Gentile heart. He turned to the crowd. "Verily I tell you," said He, "not even in Israel have I found such faith." And it was justified: the slave was healed.

The miracle had diverse consequences. Certainly it won the centurion and his household, and they would find in the Gospel the satisfaction which their heathen hearts had been craving and which Judaism had but imperfectly afforded. And it would impress the people, assuring them of the Lord's Messiahship and making Him more than ever the hero of the hour. But it was ill pleasing to their rulers. His commendation of a Gentile's faith as excelling the faith which He had found in Israel would offend their Jewish pride; and it would aggrieve them that they had lost the devotion of so generous an adherent. Their covert jealousy of Jesus passed into open antagonism, and from that day they were His implacable enemies, eager to find occasion against Him.

He resumed His ministry at Capernaum, having all the while in view the formation of His band of comrades. Already He had chosen four, and He kept observing the disciples whom He won, and wherever He found a man whom He deemed qualified for so high and sacred a trust, He claimed his service and enrolled him in His company. There were many in



those days of His popularity who coveted the honour and some who even volunteered for the service ; and it proves how deep was the impression which He had created that among these was a Scribe or Rabbi. He was persuaded that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the King of Israel ; and his idea was that, though meanwhile it was veiled, He would presently disclose His majesty, and His followers would then share His glory. And so he approached Him. " Teacher," said he, " I will follow you wherever you go."

The accession of so distinguished a personage would have seemed in the popular judgment a conspicuous triumph, and worldly policy would have welcomed it ; but Jesus knew the Scribe's thoughts and He promptly dispelled his fond illusion by setting the stern reality before him. " The foxes have holes," He said, " and the wild birds nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay down His head." The Scribe was dreaming of a triumphal progress in the royal train of the Son of David, and Jesus showed what following Him actually meant—fellowship in the sufferings of the homeless Son of Man.

It is written that " even the Christ did not glorify Himself to be made a High Priest " ; and it is no wonder that, when He encountered a light-hearted aspirant to fellowship in His redemptive ministry, He sternly bade him count the cost. But where He was satisfied of a man's fitness, He claimed his service and would take no denial. Once He addressed His call to a disciple. Ancient tradition has it that he was Philip of Bethsaida ; and perhaps he was. At all events he displayed the very diffidence which had characterised Philip at Bethabara and which

Heb. v. 5.



clung to him to the last. "Follow Me" said Jesus. "Lord," he faltered, "permit me first to go and bury Cf. Jo. vi. 5-7, xii. 21, 22, my father." Observe what this means. It does not mean that the disciple's father was xiv. 8-10. lying dead. It is a proverbial phrase which to this day a Syrian employs when he would evade a difficult undertaking. "I must first bury my father" he says, pleading the excuse of domestic ties. Surely that disciple had forgotten the example of Simon who had left his wife, and James and John who had left their father and mother at the Master's call. In truth it was faithlessness that prompted the excuse; for who was ever a loser by obeying God? Worldly calculation befits worldlings, dead while they live; and Jesus sternly sweeps the pretext aside. "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but you—you follow Me."<sup>1</sup>

Another volunteered in a flush of enthusiasm. "I will follow you, Lord," he cried; "but," he added Cf. 1 Ki. xix. 20. like Elisha when Elijah called him, "first permit me to bid my household farewell." It seems a natural and innocent request, but it betrayed the man's character. What would have happened had one so impulsive returned home and announced his purpose to leave all and follow Jesus? His friends would have cried out against it, and he would inevitably have succumbed to their dissuasions. It was an ancient proverb that "a ploughman, unless he bends to the work, draws a crooked furrow"; and perhaps with this in His mind Jesus replied: "No one who has put his hand to the plough and looks back, is well set for the Kingdom of God."

<sup>1</sup> So, on ancient evidence, ran our Lord's command, diversely reported by the Evangelists.

## GATHERING CLOUDS

Mk. ii. 2-28 ; Mt. ix. 2-17, xii. 1-8 ; Lk. v. 17-vi. 5.

THE popularity of Jesus was grievous to the rulers. He was the hero of the multitude, but in the eyes of the Pharisees, the guardians of traditional orthodoxy, He was a dangerous innovator ; and it shows how deeply they were alarmed that there now appeared at Capernaum a commission of Rabbis representing the synagogues of the land and <sup>Cf. Lk. v. 17.</sup> charged with the maintenance of a jealous surveillance of His speech and behaviour.

There were several complaints which they had against Him and which they would fain substantiate. One was the blasphemy, as they deemed it, of His personal claim ; and this issue was soon raised. He was teaching in the synagogue, and a huge congregation had assembled. The building was thronged, and a crowd, unable to gain admission, beset the entrance, straining to catch His voice, when four men approached carrying a paralytic on a litter. They were bringing him to the Healer, and they would not be debarred. They were familiar with the interior and, betaking themselves to the rear of the building and ascending the stairway to the flat roof, they prized up the flagstones and lowered the litter in front of the preacher's dais. It was indeed a reckless proceeding but, evincing a sore need and a resolute faith, it won the Master's sympathy. He surveyed the helpless sufferer. It was

no uncommon case—physical debility from moral excess. The paralytic was a sinner—a penitent sinner, and forgiveness was his chief need. “Courage, My child!” said Jesus; “your sins are forgiven.”

The inquisitors occupied the front seats, the places of honour; and immediately they started whispering excitedly to each other. They Cf. Mt. xxiii. 6; Mk. xiii. 39; Lk. xi. 43, xx. 46. had gained the opportunity which they desired. God alone can forgive sins, and Jesus had usurped the divine prerogative. It was blasphemy, and blasphemy was a capital offence. He promptly accepted their challenge. “Which,” He demanded, “is easier—to say ‘Your sins are forgiven’ or to say ‘Rise and walk’?” They made no reply. None was needed; for it was a principle of the Rabbinical theology that, since sickness was penal, healing was impossible without forgiveness. He turned to the helpless creature. “Rise,” said He, “take up your couch, and away home.” And His command was obeyed.

Observe the argument. According to His critics healing implied antecedent forgiveness. They had challenged His authority to forgive sins. Absolution was a divine prerogative, and they called Him a blasphemer because He claimed it. And He met them with a miracle which on their own admission attested His claim. It was not merely an affirmation but, *ex hypothesi*, a demonstration of His deity.

Silenced at the moment, they were the more exasperated and cast about for another charge. Nor had they long to wait. Leaving the synagogue Jesus took His way along the shore of the Lake in the direction of the custom-house which stood at the northern

approach to the town. The people trooped after Him, and He discoursed to them as they went. On reaching the custom-house He espied a taxgatherer named Levi sitting at his desk. Any other than Jesus would have passed him with scorn ; for the taxgatherers or, as they were called in Latin, the publicans were outcasts among the Jews. They were the local agents of the imperial government, and their business was the extortion of its oppressive tribute. It was galling to the spirit of a proud race, and no Jew would have discharged the odious office unless he were oblivious alike of patriotism and of religion. Hence in popular esteem the taxgatherers were classed with "the sinners," Cf. Mt. xi. "the harlots," and "the heathen." Give 19, xviii. 17, xxi. men an ill name, and they will generally 31, 32. deserve it ; and the taxgatherers were a dissolute and regardless class.

They were social pariahs, and it had surprised the populace and shocked the Pharisees that Jesus had shown a kindly interest in them and their associates. Levi was plainly no stranger to Him. Though an outcast from the synagogue, he had many a time heard Him discoursing in the open, and His Gospel had touched the poor sinner's heart. Jesus had found opportunities of conversing with him ; and observing his qualities, He had marked him for His service. And now He called him. "Follow Me" He said ; and Levi obeyed with eager alacrity. Like Simon he got a new name. Thenceforth he was no longer Levi but Matthew, which is the Greek Theodore, "Gift of God" ; and he proved no less. In after days, employing his practised pen in a nobler cause, he wrote in Aramaic for his Jewish countrymen that earliest record of the Master's

earthly ministry which was entitled *The Oracles of Jesus* and which formed the basis of our first Gospel.

He bravely began his new career with a public confession. He made a banquet in his house, and invited to it not only Jesus and His followers but a large company of taxgatherers and sinners, his former associates. It was the fashion that the door of a banquet-hall should stand open, admitting strangers to Cf. Lk. vii. witness the festivity; <sup>1</sup> and the Scribes in 36, 37. their inquisitorial zeal entered after Him and saw Him take His couch at table in the place of honour next the host. In their judgment it was a grave impropriety that He should mingle in friendly intercourse with so disreputable a company; and they construed it as an evidence of His own moral obliquity. Smarting from their discomfiture in the synagogue, they durst not challenge Him directly, but they indignantly accosted the disciples. "He is eating and drinking," they cried, "with the taxgatherers and sinners!"

He overheard their angry remonstrance, and He interposed. Long ago the philosopher Antisthenes, the founder of the Cynic school, had been reproached for associating with evil men, and his answer was: "The physicians take to do with the sick, but they have not the fever. It is absurd to weed out tares from the wheat and the ineffectives in war, yet suffer evil men in the state." And here Jesus repeats the old maxim. "It is not the strong," said He, "that have need of a physician but the ailing." It was an answer to the insinuation that He could not be a holy man, or

<sup>1</sup> A fashion which survived long. Cf. Macaulay's *Hist.*, chap. xxiii. p. 2802 (Firth's edn.): "During the banquet the room was filled with people of fashion, who went to see the grantees eat and drink."

He would not have kept such company ; but it was more. " Go," He cried, " and learn what this means : ' It is mercy that I desire and not sacrifice.' " <sup>Hos. vi. 6.</sup> That, according to the Scriptures which they professed to revere and which it was their business to interpret, was God's way ; and it was the way of Jesus. Holiness with Him was not ceremonial observance but compassion for the sinful. In befriending sinners and winning them back to God He was fulfilling His Messianic mission. " For I did not come to call righteous men but sinners."

Again He had silenced His critics ; but they soon returned to the charge. Their complaint now was His attitude toward the ceremonial law, and, warned by their previous discomfitures, they proceeded cunningly. There was at Capernaum a number of the Baptist's disciples, devout Jews who valued the ancient usages, especially that of fasting which the Pharisees practised so ostentatiously and which John had inculcated in his penitential discipline. They wondered at the Lord's disregard of those sacred ordinances, and probably it was this that restrained them from owning Him as their Master. Here the Scribes recognised their opportunity. They interviewed the Baptist's disciples and told them of the scene in Levi's house. The story troubled those earnest and simple-hearted men, and presently they waited upon Jesus. " Why," they asked, " do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not ? "

He answered by quoting a saying of their master at Ænon shortly before his arrest. It had vexed <sup>Cf. Jo. iii.</sup> his disciples that his fame was being eclipsed <sup>29, 30.</sup> by the growing popularity of Jesus ; and he had told them that they should rather rejoice. For Jesus was



the Messiah, the Heavenly Bridegroom ; and as for himself he was merely the groomsman whose office it was in those days to superintend the bridal feast and present the bridegroom to the bride, rejoicing in his joy. " Would you," asked Jesus, " have the bridal company mourn ? Should they not rather, like your master, share the Bridegroom's joy ? " And then, thinking of the tragic end which the hostility of the rulers was even then foreshadowing, He added that there would come a time when His disciples should mourn.

That Pharisaic protest voiced by the Baptist's disciples raised a large question—the relation between the old order and the new ; and on this Jesus proceeded to discourse. He would say much, but only a few graphic and memorable sentences are recorded. He dealt with a spirit always prevalent in periods of transition when " the old order changeth, yielding place to new "—the spirit of conservatism which clings to the past and would fain perpetuate its outworn customs. This was the spirit which possessed those disciples of the Baptist who would have carried the institution of fasting into the glad Kingdom of Heaven, and which afterwards embittered the Judaists against St. Paul when he proclaimed the passing of the ancient ritual. It is a fatal spirit, and He displayed its mischievousness by likening it first to stitching a patch of fresh cloth on a worn garment : when the patch shrinks, it tears the old stuff, and the rent is worse than ever ; and again to putting new wine into old wine-skins : when the wine ferments, it bursts the unsupple leather, and wine and skins both perish. The world is ever changing, and " the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns " ; and obstinate conservatism precipitates

revolution. It may put a temporary arrest on progress; but the stream is merely dammed back, and presently it bursts the barrier and rushes on its way, a devastating flood. Nevertheless there is a soul of goodness in the spirit of conservatism; for the old order is always endeared to loyal hearts by hallowed associations and tender memories. And this generous instinct Jesus approved. "No one," He added, quoting from the Book of Ecclesiasticus, the most beautiful of the uncanonical Jewish Scriptures, "after drinking old wine desires new; for he says 'The old is kindly.'" True wisdom lies in at once loving the old and welcoming the new, retaining whatever in the past was good and carrying it forward into the ampler future. ix. 10.

There was no institution which the Pharisees magnified more than the Sabbath, the Day of Rest. According to its original design it was a gracious and beneficent institution, securing for man and beast a respite from toil and for man a season of heavenly communion; but they had turned it into a grievous oppression by elaborating the prohibition of work and imposing a multitude of petty and vexatious restrictions. For a while our Lord's practice gave them no offence, since He was punctual in attendance at the synagogue and His employments were all religious; but now at length they find Him guilty of a contravention of their Sabbatarian regulations. Cf. Ex. xx. 8-11.

Time had quickly sped, and the first year of His Galilean ministry was nearing its close. The harvest was fast ripening in the fields on the Plain of Genesaret, and since it was ready for the sickle at the beginning of April, it would now be the month of March. The Jewish law, ever solicitous of popular rights,

required that there should always be a right-of-way through sown lands, and one Sabbath Day Jesus and His disciples were passing through the cornfields. Perhaps they were returning home from worship in the synagogue. At all events they had been long abroad

and the disciples were hungry, and, availing themselves of a legal privilege, they plucked ripe ears as they passed and rubbed out the grain between the palms of their hands.

The watchful Scribes were dogging His steps, and here they perceived an opportunity. Reaping on the Sabbath was forbidden, and on the Rabbinical interpretation the term included the plucking of an ear; threshing also was forbidden, and it was threshing to rub out the grain. Here was a double violation of the Sabbath law, and violation of the Sabbath law was a capital offence. "See," they cried, "what they are doing!—a thing which is not allowable."

He met them with contemptuous sarcasm. Scribes though they were, it was little they knew of the Scripture. "Have you never even read what David did?"

1 Sam. xxi. In his flight from the court of Saul he had

1-6. visited the sanctuary at Nob and for the refreshment of himself and his followers had taken the hallowed bread which "it was not allowable" for any but the priests to eat. That incident established the broad principle that human need is paramount. Nor

was direct sanction lacking; for did not the very priests constantly violate the letter of the

Cf. Num. xxviii. 9, 10. law by doing the work of the Temple in the preparation of the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the drink offering? "And I tell you," says Jesus, "that something greater than the Temple is here."

And what was that? It was just human need. "Had you recognised what this means, 'It is mercy that I desire and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless." Truly human need <sup>Hos. vi. 6.</sup> is paramount, and it is the very *raison d'être* of the Sabbath. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; and therefore the Son of Man"—touched as He is with the feeling of man's infirmity—"is Lord even of the Sabbath."



THE SECOND YEAR OF HIS MINISTRY





## AT THE PASSOVER

Mt. xii. 9-21 ; Mk. iii. 1-6 ; Lk. vi. 6-11. Jo. v.

It is written that after the rencontre in the cornfield Jesus "migrated thence." The Passover, which fell that year (27 A.D.) on April 9, was approaching, and He set out on the journey to Jerusalem. Mt. xii. 9. Anxious to escape further annoyance from the exasperated Scribes, He would follow the direct route along the western shore of the Lake ; but they observed His departure and pursued Him and His disciples to the first station, probably, as the narrative suggests, Tiberias, Herod Antipas' new capital, which, if not actually completed, was then nearing completion. It was thus on Friday that He left Capernaum, since Tiberias was only some ten miles southward and it was toward the eve of Sabbath when He arrived.

He remained there over the Sabbath, and after His wont He attended the synagogue and discoursed to the congregation. His vigilant enemies also attended ; and among the worshippers was a Cf. Lk. iv. 6. man whose right hand was crippled, evidently by rheumatism—a common malady on the sultry shores of the Lake. Ancient tradition has it that he was a stone-mason, and he thus appealed to Jesus : " I was a mason seeking a livelihood with my hands. I pray you, Jesus, to restore me health that I may not shamefully beg my bread." Here was a crucial issue. The Rabbinical law ordained that only where the

patient's life was in danger might a physician apply remedies. The Scribes were all agog. What would Jesus do ?

He called the man to the front ; and then, quoting the phrase which they had employed last Sabbath in the cornfield, He demanded : " Is it ' allowable on the Sabbath ' to do good or harm, to save life or kill ? " Had He asked whether it was allowable on the Sabbath to heal the man, they would have answered : " No.

Cf. Lk. His life is in no danger. Let him wait till the  
xiii. 14. Sabbath is past, and then come and be healed.'

But the question as Jesus put it admitted of only one answer ; and they kept silence. He swept an indignant glance round the circle of sullen and pitiless faces. " Stretch out your hand " said He ; and the man obeyed. His hand was healed.

They had not a word to say ; but their public discomfiture infuriated them, and on leaving the synagogue they conferred and resolved to arraign Him. They had two charges against Him—blasphemy and Sabbath-breaking, and both were capital offences. It emboldened them in their design that the Herodians co-operated with them. It was an unnatural and unholy alliance ; for who were the Herodians ? They were Sadducees ;

Cf. Mt. and the Sadducees were the inveterate ad-  
xvi. 6 ; Mk. versaries of the Pharisees. They were the  
viii. 15. Romanising party in the Jewish state. They

acknowledged the imperial supremacy, and in requital of their subservience they were rewarded with the lucrative offices of the priesthood. Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee, was a vassal of Rome, and within his dominion they paid him homage, attending his court and supporting his administration. Hence they

were styled Herodians, and they were numerous and influential in his capital of Tiberias.

Their alliance with the Scribes meant the leaguings of Church and State against our Lord. At any moment He might be arrested like the Baptist. It was unsafe for Him to remain at Tiberias, and He "retreated thence" and proceeded southward. His departure was observed and an importunate <sup>Mt. xii. 15.</sup> throng pursued after Him. Delay was perilous, yet He would not refuse their entreaties. He healed them all, enjoining secrecy lest His enemies should be the more provoked; and then He hastened on His way until He reached the frontier of Decapolis and passed beyond Herod's jurisdiction.

It was an unpleasant situation that confronted Him on His arrival at Jerusalem. Reports of His Galilean ministry had preceded Him thither. He had been delated to the rulers as a heretic, especially as a blasphemer and a Sabbath-breaker; and they eyed Him jealously, ready, should occasion arise, to arraign Him before the Sanhedrin on either of these capital charges.

And occasion soon arose. There was in the city in those days a medicinal pool, popularly known as Bethesda, "The House of Mercy." Its situation is undetermined, but the oldest tradition identifies it with The Twin Pools close under Fort Antonia which adjoined the Temple precincts on the north-east. And certainly it was near the Temple, since, says St. Jerome, its water had a reddish hue, and this, really due to mineral ingredients in the spring which supplied it, was commonly attributed to infiltration of the blood of the sacrificial victims. It was a peculiarity of the pool that it was subject to periodic disturbance. It

was a natural phenomenon occasioned by subterranean volcanic movements ; but popular fancy ascribed it to the intervention of an angel who descended from time to time and stirred the pool ; and it was believed that the water then possessed a special efficacy : the first to step into the pool after its ebullition would surely be healed. A colonnade with five porches had been built about it, and these were always thronged with invalids awaiting their opportunity.

On the Sabbath of the sacred week Jesus visited Bethesda and found crouching on a mat in one of the porches an old man who had been helpless for three-and-thirty years. It was a pitiful case ; for he was a moral wreck, suffering in his friendless age the penalty of youthful excess. " Do you want," said Jesus, " to get your health ? " and the poor creature told Him his story. He was just able to crawl daily to the pool and lie beside it watching for the troubling of the water ; but he had no one to help him, and always ere he could struggle to his feet another stepped in before him and he had lost his chance. " Rise," said Jesus, " take up your mat and walk." He obeyed and found himself healed.

Ere he recovered from his astonishment Jesus had slipped away ; and, unable to thank his Benefactor, he took his way to the Temple to thank God. As he passed briskly through the gate and entered the sacred court, he was challenged by some Pharisees. He was carrying his mat, and the Law prohibited the carrying of a burden on the Day of Rest, with ridiculous scrupulosity forbidding a tailor to take his needle or a scribe his pen abroad with him toward sunset on Friday evening, lest ere his return home the sun

should set and the Sabbath begin and find him carrying his burden. It was thus a violation of the Sabbath that the man should be carrying his mat, and they sternly took him to task. He explained that he had been healed, and his Healer had bidden him "take up his mat and walk." It was news to them that he had been healed, but for this they cared nothing. The breach of their law was their sole concern. "Who," they demanded, "is the fellow that said to you 'Take it up and walk'?" He did not know, and they let him pass with the reprimand.

Jesus had slipped away from Bethesda to avoid the plaudits of the bystanders, but He was not done with the man. He was on the outlook for him, and He found him in the Temple-court. "See," said He, "you have got your health: sin no more, lest something worse befall you." The man was a simple-minded creature, and he went straight to the Pharisees and innocently informed them that it was Jesus that had healed him. Here was the opportunity which they desired, and they hastened after Jesus and, overtaking Him ere He had quitted the court, they angrily assailed Him. He had healed the man on the Sabbath Day; and this was work, and their law forbade working on the Day of Rest.

He met them with a lofty argument. Did not God work on the Sabbath? Ever since the creation of the world He had continued His beneficent operations, making the sun rise and sending the dew and the rain and satisfying the desire of every living thing on the Sabbath even as on other days. "My Father has been working to this hour, and I work too."

It seems an innocent argument, yet it shocked the Pharisees and furnished them with another and still graver charge against Him. He had called God His Father, and this they construed as blasphemy. How did they so make it out? God is the Heavenly Father, and in calling Him "My Father" was He claiming more than the relationship which belongs to all the children of men? In truth He claimed much more, as the Pharisees perceived in the light of His fuller discourse. His offence was that "He termed God 'His own Father'—'His proper Father,' 'His Father in a peculiar sense'—making Himself equal to God." It was a claim to deity, and in their judgment this was blasphemy.

They had thus two capital charges on which they might arraign Him before the Sanhedrin, and they would forthwith have arrested Him but for the risk of exciting a tumult. He was the popular hero, and they must proceed warily. He faced them fearlessly and, in the hearing of the curious crowd which had thronged about them, argued with them of His high claims. He affirmed His union with God. That was the explanation of His miracles: they were the Father's works wrought through the Son. What wonder that a man should be healed by the Father, the Creator, the Life-giver, who would one day by the voice of the Son summon the dead from their graves? Well for them if on that day they believed in Him and acknowledged His claims. And how could they refuse these, attested as they were not merely by His own affirmation but by a threefold testimony? First there was the testimony which John the Baptist had borne Him little over a year ago and which had so



impressed them at the time. This they had indeed rejected, but there remained the indubitable testimony of the miracles which they were witnessing and which demonstrated His divine commission. And finally there was the testimony of the Scriptures, those sacred writings which the Pharisees so venerated and which their Scribes studied so diligently. They "searched the Scriptures," but they searched them blindly. They had a controversy with the sceptical Sadducees on the question of immortality, and they searched the Scriptures for proofs of their doctrine; but they missed their testimony to the Coming Saviour who would give eternal life to every one that believed on Him. "You search the Scriptures because you fancy that in them you have eternal life; and those Scriptures it is that testify of Me, and you will not come to Me that you may have life." And thus their Law was their condemnation. Moses had testified of Him, and had they believed Moses, they would have believed Him.

Cf. Ac.

xxiii. 8.

Cf. Lk.

xxiv. 27.

## ORDINATION OF THE TWELVE

Mk. iii. 7-12 (cf. Lk. vi. 17-19). Mk. iii. 13-19a; Lk. vi. 12-16;  
Mt. x. 2-4 (cf. Ac. i. 13). Mt. v. 1-16, 39b-42, 44-48, vii. 1-6,  
12, 15-27; Lk. vi. 20-38, 41-49.

It is St. John that records our Lord's visit to Jerusalem and His encounter with the Pharisees in the court of the Temple. He does not tell the subsequent issue, but St. Mark takes up the story and in a brief sentence indicates what befell. "Jesus," he says, "with His disciples withdrew to the Sea"—the Lake of Galilee. Cf. Mt. ii. His "withdrawal" was, according to the 12, 14, 22. usage of the Greek word, a retreat, a flight from imminent danger. His enemies were bent on destroying Him; they were watching for an opportunity to arrest Him and arraign Him on the capital charges of Sabbath-breaking and blasphemy; and He hastily quitted the city and travelled home to Capernaum.

On resuming His ministry there He found His embarrassments largely increased. His appearance in the Sacred Capital when it was thronged with worshippers from near and far, had spread His fame beyond Galilee and attracted troops of strangers to Capernaum, not only from Judæa but from far southern Idumæa, Peræa east of the Jordan, and Phœnicia in the north. So large and eager were the crowds which gathered about Him whenever He appeared by the

Lakeside that He had to practise an expedient which He had once before employed. He bade His fisher disciples keep a small boat always ready, Cf. Lk. v. and He would get into it and, pushing off a little way, discourse to the multitude on the beach. He continued His ministry of healing, and He was beset by sick folk who in their eagerness, says the Evangelist, would "tumble over Him that they might touch Him." His miracles were hailed as evidences of His Messiahship, and despite His efforts to restrain it the popular excitement flamed higher than ever.

Thus embarrassingly began the second year of His Galilean ministry, and thenceforward He followed a new method. During the first year His principal employment had been preaching to the multitude. All the while, however, He had been forming His band of comrades who should aid Him in His ministry while He was with them and continue it after He was gone. Their number was now complete, and henceforth their instruction was His chief concern. More and more He withdrew from the clamorous multitude and devoted Himself to His comrades. Ever and anon He would leave Capernaum and retire with them to some quiet retreat where He might commune with them undisturbed of the things of His Kingdom.

And now He ordains them to their high vocation. It was a momentous step, and after His wont He would not take it without first committing His way to God. At eventide instead of retiring to rest He quitted Capernaum and "went up to the mountain," the upland behind the town; and there "He spent the night in prayer to God" or, according to an ancient

reading and interpretation, "in His place of prayer," "His oratory." It was His habit, when He would hold heavenly communion, to steal forth thus at eventide; and on the lone hillside He had an accustomed retreat. It was His oratory, and thither He now resorted. Plainly He did not go alone. Throughout His ministry He craved not only fellowship with God but human sympathy, and He was wont, when He sought retirement, to take with Him the three disciples who understood Him best—Peter and James and John. It was probably they that accompanied Him now, and in the morning He sent them to summon the rest.

They numbered twelve, and He designated them His "apostles" or "missionaries" and set them in pairs that, when they went forth on their arduous missions, they might cheer and succour each other. Who were those men so highly honoured?

Six of them are already well known—the brothers Simon Peter and Andrew, the brothers James and John, Philip, and Matthew. Of the antecedents of Simon and Andrew nothing is recorded save that their father's name was John and they were fishermen belonging to Bethsaida, the fisher-quarter of Capernaum. Regarding the brothers James and John more is known. There father was Zebedee, a prosperous fisherman, and their mother was Salome. She was a truly remarkable personage. It appears that she was a sister of the Blessed Virgin, her sons being thus in common esteem cousins to our Lord; and she was one of three devoted women

Cf. Mk. i.  
35; Lk.  
iv. 42.

Cf. Mk. ix.  
2, xiv. 33.

Cf. Mk.  
vi. 7.

Cf. Mt.  
xvi. 17;  
Jo. xxi. 15-  
17 R.V.  
Cf. Jo. i.  
44.

Cf. Mt.  
xxvii. 55;  
Mk. xv. 40.  
Cf. Mt.  
xxvii. 55  
with Jo.  
xix. 25.

who stood with her at the last beside His Cross. She was a clever and courageous woman, with high though sometimes misguided ambitions Cf. Mt. xx. 20-23. on her sons' behalf; and they inherited her spirit. They were devoted to the Master; and patient as they may have been of personal wrongs, an affront to Him enkindled in their breasts a quick Cf. Mk. ix. 38, 39; Lk. ix. and passionate resentment which repeatedly 49-56. earned them His rebuke. Here is perhaps the reason of the sobriquet which He gave them. Just as at His first meeting with Simon He observed the impulsiveness of his disposition and gave him the title of Peter, "the Rock," expressing the character which he should strive to attain, so by way of admonition He styled James and John *Boanerges*, "the Sons of Thunder." Such playful badinage bespeaks the kindly familiarity of His relations with the three, and indeed they were throughout His ministry His closest and most trusted comrades. And truly they were worthy. Who can say which was the most worthy? John was recognised as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"; but Peter, so ardent, so impetuous, so prone to err, so quick to repent, surely merits the praise that he was the disciple who loved Jesus. "If," says St. Augustine, "we put the question: 'Which of the two is the better—he who loves Christ more or he who loves Him less?' who will have doubt in answering that he who loves Him more is the better? If we ask: 'Which of the two is the better—he whom Christ loves less or he whom He loves more?' we shall answer that he who is more loved by Christ is the better beyond a doubt. In the former comparison Peter is preferred to John; in the latter John to Peter." And as for James he

surely merited his place in that innermost circle ; and if little is recorded of him, it is because his career was short. He died a martyr's death under Ac. xii. 2. Herod Agrippa I in the year 44.

Andrew too, according to tradition, won the martyr's crown. He was crucified, it is said, at Patræ in Achaia on a *crux decussata* (X), hence known as " the St.

Cf. Jo. i. 40-42. Andrew's Cross." From the sacred narrative it appears that he was warmly attached to his

brother Simon ; and perhaps for this reason he was intimately associated with the favoured three.

Cf. Mk. xiii. 3 ; Ac. i. 13. It seems too that there was a close friendship

Cf. Jo. vi. 7, 8, xii. 21, 22. between him and Philip. As for the latter, though diffident and somewhat dull, he had his special gift which the Master employed.

Evidently he had an aptitude for practical affairs, and

Cf. Jo. vi. 5-7. it seems that he acted as purveyor to the company. Matthew also had his special gift.

His business in the custom-house had made him a ready scribe, and he afterwards employed his pen in writing the earliest Gospel. This was not our canonical " Gospel according to St. Matthew " but an Aramaic collection of the Sayings of our Lord. It appeared probably in the year 41, and it formed the basis of the precious Greek Gospel which bears his name and which was written as a final appeal to the unbelieving Jews just after the tragic fall of Jerusalem in the year 70. It is very significant that in the story of the Apostle's call,

Mt. ix. 9-13 ; Mk. ii. 13-17 ; Lk. v. 27-32. whereas St. Mark and St. Luke call him by his old name of Levi, our first Gospel, following his Book of Sayings, calls him by his new name

of Matthew ; and so in their catalogues of the Apostles, while the others call him simply Matthew, it adds the



odious designation "the taxgatherer." Evidently St. Mark and St. Luke, with kindly charity, would have concealed his shameful past, but he published it for the glory of his Saviour's grace.

What of the other six who now make their first appearance in the narrative? Bartholomew is named in all the catalogues, and again in the Book of Acts among the company assembled in the upper room at Jerusalem after the Resurrection; Ac. i. 13. there and nowhere else on the pages of the New Testament. It is, however, significant that Bartholomew is not a proper name but merely a patronymic, representing the Aramaic *Bar Talmai*, "the son of Talmai"; and it has been suggested that he was none Cf. 2 Sam. xiii. 37. other than Nathanael of Cana. There is indeed much reason for the identification. Would it not be strange if Nathanael alone of the five disciples whom Jesus won at Bethabara in the morning of His ministry found no place in His Apostle-company? It is St. John who tells the story, and he introduces Nathanael once more at the close of his Gospel among the Apostles who waited for the manifestation Cf. Jo. xxi. 2. of the Risen Lord at the Sea of Galilee. Surely Nathanael was an Apostle. And surely he was none other than Bar Talmai; for he was, according to St. John, a friend of Philip, and St. Matthew, who catalogues the Twelve in pairs, couples Bar Talmai with Philip as his missionary comrade.

Similarly the other Evangelists merely mention Thomas, and it is to St. John that we owe Cf. Jo. xi. 16, xiv. 5, xx. 24-29. our knowledge of the man—his despondency, his proneness ever to see the dark side, and withal his heroic devotion to the Master. And neither



is Thomas a proper name. It is an epithet signifying, as St. John observes, "the Twin," in Greek Didymus. His name, on the testimony of the historian Eusebius and others, was Judas; and it was natural that it should be superseded, since there were two others in the company who bore that unhappy name. His missionary companion was Matthew, and perhaps the reason of their association may have been that the memory of his shameful past had wrought in the latter a spirit of humility which enabled him to bear with so querulous a companion.

Next comes a second James, distinguished from the first as the son of Alphæus, the Greek form of Clopas.

Cf. Jo. xix. 25 R.V. He was known also by reason of his stature as "the Little." His mother's name was Cf. Mk. xv. 40 R.V. Mary, and he had a brother called Joses. marg.

Tradition has it that he had been a taxgatherer; and since Alphæus—presumably, in the absence of express discrimination, the same in both cases—was the father also of Levi the taxgatherer, James was Matthew's brother.

His comrade is variously designated. St. Luke calls him Judas, and to distinguish him from the other Judas of evil memory he styles him "the son of James"—not "the brother of James" as our Authorised Version has it, following an old fancy which identified him with the author of "the Epistle of Jude," a brother of "James, the Lord's brother," oblivious of the fact that

Cf. Gal. i. none of "His brethren" as yet believed in

19. Cf. Jo. vii. Him. St. Matthew, again, styles him Lebbæus 3-5. (*Libbai*) and St. Mark Thaddæus (*Taddai*).

These are epithets, *Libbai* signifying "hearty" and *Taddai* probably "affectionate"; and they were intended,

like St. Luke's mention of his unknown father, to distinguish him from the traitor. Only once does he figure in the Gospel narrative—in the Upper Cf. Jo. xiv. 22. Room where he addressed a puzzled question to the Master. It is St. John that tells the story, and he evinces a like solicitude for his comrade's good name: "Judas—not Iscariot—says to Him."

Next comes a second Simon, distinguished from Simon Peter as "the Cananæan" or, as St. Luke has it, translating the Aramaic term, "the Zealot." And who were the Zealots? They were a fraternity of desperate patriots who had pledged themselves to compass the overthrow of the Roman domination and lost no opportunity of kindling the flame of insurrection. They stood in extreme contrast to the taxgatherers who had taken service under the oppressor; and is it not remarkable that a Zealot and two taxgatherers should have met in the fellowship of Jesus? He was indeed the Reconciler.

The Zealot's comrade was "Judas Iscariot, who turned traitor." Iscariot means "the man of Kerioth," a village in the south of Judæa. His father's name was Simon; and since he also bore the local Cf. Jo. vi. 71, xiii. 26 R.V. appellation of Iscariot, it would seem that he was a landowner, occupying an hereditary estate. Judas had thus a twofold distinction. The rest of the Apostles were despised Galileans, and he was the only Judæan among them; and he was the only one who could claim consideration on the score of birth and fortune. And just this was his undoing. Worldly ambition was his besetting sin. Like all the others, he entertained the prevailing ideal of the Messiah as a King of David's lineage and, persuaded by His miracles

that He was the Messiah and would presently manifest His regal dignity and take His throne, he espoused His cause, expecting to share the splendid triumph. The course of events shattered that secular dream. The others still held true to the Master, since they had discovered in Him a diviner glory ; but the disappointment of his worldly hope was bitter to Judas and he abandoned what he deemed a lost cause. Surely it is foolish to wonder why Jesus called him to the apostleship or ask if He had been deceived. Judas had excellent qualities ; and just as Philip served as purveyor, Cf. Jo. xii. 6. so he in virtue of his peculiar aptitude acted as treasurer to the company. He was naturally endowed with high possibilities, and at the outset he promised fair, and had he resisted his baser inclination he would have achieved a noble rank in the Kingdom of Heaven ; and therefore he was called to the apostleship. Is it not God's way in His providential dealings with men to take them thus as He finds them, granting them their fitting opportunities and leaving the issue to their own determination ? He chose Saul to be king because he was most fit, yet Saul belied His trust and brought himself to dishonour

These twelve Jesus solemnly "ordained" or "appointed"—the word employed in the Septuagint Cf. 1 Sam. xii. 6. Version of the Lord's appointment of Moses and Aaron—to their high service. It was, as St. Mark defines it, a twofold service—to bear Him company and to go forth, as He might send them, on preaching missions, practising the business which would devolve upon them after His departure. They were thenceforward His fellow-workers in the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven, and He conferred

upon them, as was fitting, His Messianic power of healing.

Thereafter He discoursed to them of the work which lay before them. "Blessed are you" He began; and with their Jewish notion of an earthly kingdom they would expect to hear of a high destiny of worldly dignity. But far other was the prospect which He had in view. What awaited them and Him alike was an experience of poverty, sorrow, privation, suffering, and persecution; and therein lay their blessedness. For that was the path which the prophets had trodden before them; and it was the path which, trodden meekly and bravely and believingly, would lead to honour and triumph and an heritage in the true Kingdom of Heaven. They were called not to selfish ease but to devoted ministry, serving in an evil and dark world like the wholesome salt which, as the Galilean fishermen well knew, saved the harvest of the Lake from corruption, or like the beacon-light which guided them to the harbour.

Their success would depend on the spirit which animated them. And first He inculcates a spirit of meekness. They were going forth into a rude world where they would encounter frequent insult, wrong, and oppression; and these they must patiently and unresistingly endure. Here, be it observed, He speaks with a quiet humour. A buffet on the face was deemed of old the worst indignity that insult could inflict, exposing the aggressor to a heavy fine. "Are you smitten on the cheek?" He says. "Then do not retaliate or seek redress: turn the other cheek." This is like the Rabbinical moralist's counsel: "If your neighbour

Cf. 1 Ki.  
xxii. 24;  
Ac. xxiii.  
2; 2 Cor.  
xi. 20.

calls you an ass, put a saddle on your back." The Jewish law permitted a creditor to seize his debtor's raiment as security. He might take his under-tunic, but he must not take his cloak which served the poor man

as a blanket, or if he did, he must restore it ere nightfall. "Forgo this right" says Jesus.  
Cf. Ex. xxii. 26, 27.

"If he takes your tunic, let him have your cloak too." Again, the Roman law empowered military officers to "commandeer" men and beasts as baggage-bearers, and this was indignantly resented by the patriotic Jews. "Cheerfully submit," says Jesus. "If you are commandeered for a mile, go two."

And their meek submissiveness must be matched in happier conditions with a large generosity. "Give to one who begs from you, and from one who would borrow of you turn not away." Of course this is playfully spoken. Indiscriminate charity is a mischievous wrong, ruinous, as Timon of Athens proved, to the giver and demoralising to the recipient. To refuse an alms or a loan is often both a duty and a kindness; and this our Lord recognises. See what follows. After inculcating thus a boundless generosity He at once commends and defines it by displaying the supreme example. The spring of charity is love; and true love is universal, embracing not one's friends alone but one's enemies. It is thus that the Heavenly Father loves, making His sun rise with impartial benediction on evil men and good and sending rain on righteous and unrighteous. And if we be His sons, then we shall love even as He does, kind to all, befriending all, forgiving all, yet refusing, even as He does, what they ask amiss, withal remembering our own unworthiness. This is

our Lord's requirement—that we should deal with others as God has dealt with us, undeserving though we be, and as we would have them deal with us were we in their place and they in ours. “Whatsoever you desire that men should do to you, do you always so to them.”

Truly the chief reason of our impatience with others is obliviousness of our own demerits ; and their harsh censure of us is largely a retaliation of our censure of them. “Why,” says our Lord, quoting a carpenter's proverb, “see the chip in your brother's eye, never considering the log in your own ? ” Kindly judgment reveals a kindly nature and wins a responsive kindness ; yet it is a spurious charity that ignores moral distinctions, and there are occasions when severity is a duty. The Apostles would encounter unreasonable and contumelious men whom there was no winning ; and these they must leave alone. Argument would only provoke ribaldry ; and why expose the Gospel-message to blasphemy ? Why, in proverbial phrase, “give what is holy to dogs or cast pearls before swine ” ?

The worst offenders would be, as appeared soon after His departure, not the avowed adversaries of the Gospel but “the false prophets,” the heretical teachers who would arise within the Church ; and the Lord closes His discourse with a solemn admonition to His Apostles. If they were faithless to their commission, all their gifts would avail them nothing but would rather win them His heavier condemnation on the day of reckoning. His teaching was the foundation on which they must build, and any other foundation was as shifting sand.



## FRESH ANNOYANCE

Mk. iii. 19*b* (Mt. viii. 1 ; Lk. vi. 17*a*)-35 ; Mt. xii. 22  
(cf. ix. 32-34)-50 ; Lk. xi. 14-36 (xii. 10), viii. 19-21.

THE day would be well advanced when the Lord and His newly ordained Apostles got home to Capernaum. He had need of rest after the night's vigil and the morning's employment, but He found none ; nor could they even snatch a hasty meal. For the house was beset by an excited crowd. The occasion of the commotion was the appearance of a deaf mute, conducted thither in the hope of deliverance from the malignant spirit which, according to the belief of the time, had taken possession of him ; and the public interest was the more keen since the Rabbinical Cf. Lk. v. inquisitors who had already so harassed the 17.

Lord and delated Him to the rulers at Jerusalem, had resumed their espionage and were now watching the issue. Moreover, His kinsfolk—Mary and her sons and daughters—had heard of His doings. His “brethren,” who as yet regarded His claims with Cf. Jo. vii. open and derisive incredulity and were only 3-5.  
Cf. Ac. i. won to faith by the transcendent demonstra- 14.  
tion of His Resurrection, were persuaded that He was out of His mind, and they had come from Nazareth to arrest Him and convey Him home. Apparently they had imbued Mary with their coarse opinion : at all events she had accompanied them to Capernaum.

He healed the suppliant, and the acclamations of

the crowd exasperated the inquisitors. They could not deny the reality of the miracle, but they would not acknowledge it, and in their desperate determination to discredit Him they ascribed it to "black art": He had power over the demons because He was in alliance with their prince Satan or, as they styled him, Beelzebub. Beelzebub, "Lord of flies," was of old the god of the Philistian city of Ekron, and <sup>Cf. 2 Ki. i. 2.</sup> the Jews had identified him with Satan, contumeliously modifying the name to Beelzebub, "Lord of dung."

It was a preposterous allegation, and He contemptuously demonstrated its absurdity. It was proverbial that civil strife is fatal to a state; and if Satan were thus warring with his satellites, his kingdom was doomed. There were Jewish exorcists, and <sup>Cf. Ac. xix. 13, 14.</sup> since they had the approval of the Pharisees, why was He condemned for doing what they professed? It is only by mastering its lord that a stronghold can be mastered; and surely His mastery of the evil spirits proved that He had mastered Satan and was not his ally but God's.

After disposing thus of their allegation, He pronounced upon them a terrible condemnation. He told them that they were guilty of a sin, the one sin, for which there is no forgiveness. For what had they done? They had not merely "spoken a word against the Son of Man." That they might excusably have done, since it was difficult for them with their Jewish ideal of the Messiah to acknowledge His claim. It was a thing immeasurably worse that they had done. In ascribing to Satanic agency that miracle of mercy, so manifestly a work of God, they had "blasphemed

against the Holy Spirit," and incurred the woe denounced by the ancient prophet on "them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." They had entailed upon themselves, by the operation of an inexorable law, the fatal doom of spiritual atrophy.

The law is that an abused faculty decays; and it operates universally. Look at the physical domain. "There are," wrote Henry Drummond, "certain burrowing animals—the mole, for instance—which have taken to spending their lives beneath the surface of the ground. And Nature has taken her revenge upon them in a perfectly natural way—she has closed up their eyes. If they mean to live in darkness, she argues, eyes are obviously a superfluous function. By neglecting them these animals made it clear that they do not want them. And as one of Nature's fixed principles is that nothing shall exist in vain, the eyes are presently taken away, or reduced to a rudimentary state. There are fishes also which have had to pay the same terrible forfeit for having made their abode in dark caverns where eyes can never be required. . . . Their eyes are a mockery. Externally they are organs of vision—the front of the eye is perfect; behind, there is nothing but a mass of ruins. The optic nerve is a shrunken, atrophied and insensate thread. These animals have organs of vision, and yet they have no vision. They have eyes, but they see not."

Look again at the intellectual domain. Darwin has told in his *Autobiography* that up to the age of thirty he had pleasure in poetry and art and music, but in his later years he lost his æsthetic tastes. "My mind,"

he says, "seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, . . . and if I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week ; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use."

And the law operates no less in the spiritual domain. One who is false to love loses the very faculty of loving.

"The fire that 's blawn on Beltane e'en,  
May weel be black gin Yule ;  
But blacker fa' awaits the heart  
Where first fond luve grows cule."

And even so it happens with a soul which "does despite to the Spirit of grace." Its spiritual instincts are blasted. This is the doom which had befallen those Pharisees. They had closed their eyes against the light till they could not see ; they had shut their ears to the pleadings of heavenly grace till they could not hear ; they had hardened their hearts till they had grown callous ; and now, says our Lord, they were "guilty of " or rather "in the grip of an eternal sin." Their spiritual nature was atrophied ; repentance was no longer possible for them ; and where there is no repentance, there is no forgiveness.

It was the official inquisitors from Jerusalem that had engaged Him in this sharp controversy, and they would quail before His stern condemnation. But there were some of the local Pharisees in the audience and, resenting the discomfiture of their colleagues and the popular applause, they interposed. Feigning honest perplexity, they suggested that He should

accord them an indubitable attestation of His claims by working a miracle in their presence. "Teacher," said they, "we wish to see a sign from you." It seemed a safe challenge. Should He accede, they would evade the issue in their accustomed fashion; but probably they anticipated that He would refuse, and then they would represent His refusal as a confession of impotence.

And He did refuse; but His refusal was no confession of impotence: it was a crushing indictment. A miracle begets wonderment, but wonderment is not faith. Faith is a spiritual persuasion, the soul's response to a spiritual appeal. "It is," said He, "an evil and adulterous generation that seeks after a sign; and no sign will be given it but the sign of Jonah." And what was the sign of Jonah? It was his message. He wrought no miracle in Nineveh. He simply warned its sinful people of impending judgment; and they believed and repented and turned from their evil way.<sup>1</sup> No other sign would the Lord grant His contemporaries; and if they refused it, they would stand condemned. For what message had ever been like His? The Ninevites had repented at Jonah's message: Cf. I Ki. x. "and behold, something greater than Jonah is here." The Queen of Sheba had travelled far to hear the wisdom of Solomon: "and behold, something greater than Solomon is here."

<sup>1</sup> It is plain from a comparison with Lk. xi. 30 that Mt. xii. 40 is an interpolation, a dull marginal comment imported by a copyist, as so frequently happened (cf. Jo. v. 4 R.V.), into the sacred text. The Ninevites knew nothing of Jonah's adventure with the whale; and its introduction here contradicts our Lord's argument, His point being that it was not a miracle but the prophet's message that won the Ninevites.

It had been a hot encounter, and He had dealt very sternly with His assailants, yet all the while there was pity in His heart. And truly they had need of pity. For after their perverted fashion they were seeking a high and holy end. They were Pharisees, and they had a zeal for God and righteousness; but it was an uninstructed zeal. Cf. Rom. x. 2.

Righteousness, as they conceived it, was achieved not by the inward operation of heavenly grace but by observance of the ceremonial requirements of the Law. And thus religion was with them not a divine renewal but a process of self-reformation, and it left the heart uncleansed and unsatisfied. It was a miserable and truly perilous condition, and here He portrays by a graphic image the inevitable and disastrous issue. It was believed of old that ruinous and desolate places

were the haunts of demons ever eager to exchange their drear abodes for a human lodgement. All afflictions, physical, mental, and moral, were ascribed to demoniacal possession, and the remedy lay in the expulsion

of the noisome tenant. Often the cure was merely temporary, and then it was supposed that the banished demon had regained possession, exulting in its triumph. "When the unclean spirit has gone out of the man, it roams through waterless places, seeking refreshment, and finds none. Then it says: 'I will return to my house whence I came out'; and on coming it finds it unoccupied and swept and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and goes in and dwells there. And the last state of that man proves worse than the first."

Cf. Is. xiii. 19-22, xxxiv. 13, 14; Jer. li. 37; Rev. xviii. 2.



Here, in old-world imagery which His hearers could understand, our Lord depicts a familiar and perennial moral tragedy. Examples abound in the experience alike of nations and of individuals. So it befell England in the seventeenth century. What else was the orgy of profligacy after the Restoration than a reaction from the rigorous restraint of the Reign of the Saints? Puritanism had forcibly expelled the unclean spirit, and for a season it seemed as though the nation had been cleansed. But it is not enough that the unclean spirit be cast out unless the Holy Spirit enter and take possession. The nation was swept and put in order; but her heart remained tenantless. Some tenant the heart must have; and when the door was opened, the old tenant returned in sevenfold strength, and the last state of the nation proved worse than the first.

It was a picturesque and eloquent appeal to the Pharisees and the multitude to yield their hearts to the grace of the Holy Spirit, and it evinces how deeply His hearers were moved that His closing words were interrupted by an admiring exclamation. It was a woman that spoke. She had marked His gallant bearing as He confronted so fearlessly and triumphantly His powerful adversaries; and her womanly heart warmed to Him. "O to have a son like that!" was her thought; and she involuntarily exclaimed: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts which you sucked!" "Nay rather," was His answer, "blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it."

Just then, in pathetic contrast, a message was brought Him that "His mother and His brethren"—

Mary and her sons and daughters—were on the outskirts of the crowd, anxious to speak to Him but unable to reach Him. He knew their errand, and He answered: "Who is My mother? and who are My brothers?" Then He pointed to His disciples. "Here," said He, "are My mother and My brothers. Whosoever does the will of My Father in Heaven, that is My brother and sister and mother." In very truth He was not the son of Mary. He was the Eternal Son of God Incarnate, and spiritual kinship was the only tie which bound Him to the children of men.

## THE TWELVE AND THE MULTITUDE

Lk. xi. 1-13; Mt. vi. 9-15 (Mk. xi. 25, 26), vii. 7-11. Mt. xiii. 1-52;  
Mk. iv. 1-34; Lk. viii. 4-18, x. 23, 24, xiii. 18-21.

It is very noteworthy that the beginning of the second year of our Lord's ministry witnessed a change in His method. Throughout the first year He busied Himself with the multitude, teaching them in the synagogue or on the shore of the Lake and healing their diseases. All the while, however, He was forming His company of Apostles, observing the men whose hearts He had won and, whenever He found one qualified, claiming him for the high service. And from that day when He ordained the Twelve on the hillside, they were His chief concern. He held aloof, so far as might be, from the enthusiastic multitude and the carping rulers, and conversed with the Twelve, ever and anon quitting Capernaum and retreating with them to some solitude—the upland behind the town, the eastern shore of the Lake, or the far north—that He might be alone with them and instruct them in the things of His Kingdom. The reason was not that He had despaired of the multitude and had no longer any care for them. Rather was it that the time was short. He was the Saviour of the world, but His errand was not to win the world. He had come to purchase redemption by His infinite Sacrifice. This was His task, and the task of proclaiming the salvation which He should win was reserved for the men whom He had chosen to

continue His work when He was gone. And therefore His supreme business meanwhile was their preparation for this so great a service.

One evening He retired with them, probably to His hillside oratory, and gave Himself to prayer until the break of day. It was no novel employment for Him. The Twelve had often seen Him so engaged ; and this had constantly surprised them—that He had never vouchsafed them instruction in the holy art which He so largely practised. They were the more surprised since several of them had been disciples of the Baptist, and he had not only enjoined his disciples to pray but furnished them with forms of prayer. One of these has been preserved—a prayer for the Messiah's advent :

“ O Father, show us Thy glory :

    O Son, cause us to hear Thy voice :

    O Spirit, sanctify our hearts for evermore. Amen.”

The Lord had given them no form of prayer, nor had He, save by His example, inculcated the blessed exercise. They had often wondered at the omission, and now, when He rose from His knees, they appealed to Him. One of them, perhaps as on another Cf. Jo. xiii. occasion John, the disciple whom He loved, <sup>23, 24.</sup> acted as spokesman. “ Lord,” he said, “ teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”

He promptly responded. First He gave them a form or rather a model of prayer. “ Thus pray :

‘ Our Father in Heaven,

    Hallowed be Thy name ;

    Thy Kingdom come ;

    Thy will be done, as in Heaven, on earth also.

Our bread for the approaching day give us to-day ;  
And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven  
our debtors ;  
And bring us not into temptation, but rescue us from  
the Evil One.' "

It is a morning prayer ; and the petition for " bread for the approaching day " was most fitting for men like the Twelve who had left all to follow Him and often knew not when they awoke where they would find the day's bread. But truly it befits us all inasmuch as everything we have is God's gift, not merely the bread we eat but our health to enjoy it. Who ever knows when he awakes what loss the day may bring, what temptation, what trial, what perilous ordeal ? And therefore it surely becomes us each morning to pray that, if it be God's will, we may be spared the ordeal, or if we must face it, He may grant us the aids of His heavenly grace to bring us through it scatheless and undishonoured.

There is nothing in the prayer which was not plain to the Twelve ; and the Lord made no comment on any of its petitions save one—the fifth : " Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." And His comment was not an explanation but an emphatic reaffirmation : " If you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will forgive you also ; but if you forgive not men, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." It was no novel doctrine. Had it not been written of old that " the Lord turned  
Job xlii.  
10. the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends " ? And in the most beautiful of all the apocryphal books, one which Jesus loved as appears

from frequent echoes of it in His teaching, another Jesus, the Son of Sirach, had said :

Ecclus.  
xxviii. 2.

“ Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done thee ;  
And then thy sins shall be pardoned when thou prayest.”

It was not because it was an unfamiliar doctrine that our Lord emphasised it, but because it is a truth which we are apt to forget. And indeed it is supremely important.

“ ’Tis not enough to weep my sins ;  
’Tis but one step to Heaven :  
When I am kind to others, then  
I know myself forgiven.”

There is no forgiveness for an unforgiving soul.

What makes us remiss in prayer is generally its apparent uselessness.

“ If a flower  
Were thrown you out of heaven at intervals,  
You ’d soon attain to a trick of looking up.”

But why should we keep looking up when, as it seems, nothing ever comes ? This is an ancient and abiding perplexity, and it vexed the Twelve even as it vexes us still. And how did the Lord answer it ? He began with a stroke of that homely humour which He loved in His private intercourse, telling how a belated traveller presented himself, weary and hungry, at a friend’s door at midnight, and his host found to his dismay that his cupboard was empty. He hastened to the house of a neighbour and knocked till he awoke and without rising inquired what was ado. “ Lend me three loaves,” said the visitor. “ A friend has just



arrived, and I have nothing to set before him." "Don't bother me!" was the impatient response. "The door is now locked, and my children and I are abed. I can't get up to give you anything." But the suppliant would take no denial. He kept on knocking and beseeching until his neighbour, just to be rid of him, rose and gave him all he needed.

See, means our Lord, what comes of persistence. And if a selfish neighbour yields thus to importunity, will the Heavenly Father refuse His children's entreaties? He always answers their prayers. Often indeed He withholds what they crave, but the reason is that it is foolish and harmful; and His withholding of it is in truth a merciful response. If a child asked for a stone, thinking it was bread, or a serpent, thinking it was a fish, would his father give it? "If then you, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

It had surprised the Twelve that their Master had never taught them how to pray, but still more surprising is the sort of lesson which He at length vouchsafed them at their request. He taught them nothing new, nothing which they did not already know, nothing which was not inculcated by the Jewish teachers. Beautiful and abidingly precious as it is, His model prayer is no more than a series of petitions from the Jewish Liturgy, particularly the Morning Service; and its sole originality lies in their felicitous selection. In truth it is not a distinctively Christian prayer. As it was given, it ended abruptly, since the familiar conclusion "For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory for ever. Amen" is an early liturgical

addition. Even this is a mere Jewish doxology, and the prayer lacks that distinctive note of truly Christian prayer—the all-prevailing plea “in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.”

And what is the explanation? He furnished it in the Upper Room on the eve of His betrayal when in bidding them farewell He told them of the <sup>Jo. xvi. 23,</sup> blessed difference which His atoning sacrifice <sup>24.</sup> would make. “Verily, verily I tell you, if you ask any thing of the Father, He will give it you in My name. Hitherto you have asked nothing in My name : ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be complete.” Here is the essential distinction of Christian prayer : it is offered in the name of Christ, pleading the merit of His infinite redemption ; and until that redemption had been achieved on Calvary, Christian prayer was impossible.

It was thus that our Lord taught the Twelve. And what meanwhile of the multitude? He was in no wise neglectful of them in devoting Himself to the paramount task of training His Apostles for their future mission ; but in discoursing to them He adopted a new method. Thenceforward, it is written, <sup>Mt. xiii.</sup> “He spoke to the multitudes in parables, and <sup>34.</sup> without a parable He would speak nothing to them.” It was an old and familiar method, very congenial to the oriental mind with its naïve fondness for stories and largely employed by the great Rabbis in their interpretation of the Law.<sup>1</sup> And in its proper use it was no mere comparison of heavenly things with

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Edward Collins' *The Wisdom of Israel* in “The Wisdom of the East” series (John Murray, London)—a delightful collection of Rabbinical parables from the Babylonian Talmud and Midrash Rabbah.

earthly but the recognition of a profound relationship between the earthly and the heavenly, the seen and

Ecclus. the unseen, as it is written in the Book of  
xxxiii. 15, Ecclesiasticus :  
xlii. 24.

“ Thus look upon all the works of the Most High ;  
Two and two, one against another.”  
‘ All things are double one against another :  
And He hath made nothing imperfect.”

The Eternal World is the real world, and the world of sense is but its shadow ; and we know the Eternal World by its dim and broken adumbrations. This is the principle of our Lord's parabolic teaching.

“ For, nowise else,  
Taught He the people ; since a light is set  
Safest in lanterns ; and the things of Earth  
Are copies of the things in Heaven, more close,  
More clear, more near, more intricately linked,  
More subtly, than men guess. Mysterious,—  
Finger on lip,—whispering to wistful ears,—  
Nature doth shadow Spirit.”

Would you know God ? Then think of human fatherhood, and recognise there the shadow of the Heavenly Father. Or would you know Heaven ? Then think of your earthly home, and recognise there the shadow of the Heavenly Home, “ our Father's House.”

His adoption of the parabolic method in His popular teaching was a new departure, and the Twelve remarked it and wondered at it. “ Why,” they asked Him, “ are you speaking to them in parables ? ” And He told them the reason. It was that the multitude had shown themselves so incapable of understanding “ the

mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven." He had presented Himself as the Messiah, the Promised Redeemer ; and they had construed His claims in terms of their crude ideal of the Messiah as a secular king who should re-establish the ancient throne of David, and, encouraged by His miracles, were eagerly anticipating the day when He would display His hidden Cf. Jo. vii. 4.  
majesty and " manifest Himself to the world " in regal splendour. It was, as the final issue proved, a perilous delusion, and to continue speaking openly of the Kingdom of Heaven were simply to encourage it. " It is for this reason," said He, " that I am speaking to them in parables, because, seeing, they do not see and, hearing, they do not hear nor comprehend." The Twelve had understood, and to them He would still talk plainly of His Kingdom ; but to the multitude He would thenceforth present its mysteries in dark sayings, liable to no mischievous perversion but intelligible to understanding minds. And even His parabolic teaching would serve the supreme end of the Cf. Mk. iv. 33, 34.  
training of the Twelve ; for always after discoursing publicly He would talk privately with them and unfold to them the significance of the parables which they had just heard.

He began His parabolic teaching, according to St. Matthew, on the very day of His sharp encounter with the Pharisees. It would be toward evening, and He had gone out of doors and seated Himself on the shore of the Lake. He desired repose, but a crowd gathered round Him, so large and eager that, after His wont, He got into the boat to address them.

" Look you," He began, pointing to the broad Plain of Gennesaret whence the ripe harvest had lately been

gathered, "the sower went out to sow." As he scattered his seed broadcast, some of it fell on the beaten path, the right-of-way which ran through every cornfield; and the birds swooped down and devoured it. Some fell on patches of thin soil where the rocky substratum lay near the surface; and it quickly shot up and as quickly withered beneath the blazing sun, since the soil was shallow and afforded its roots no nourishment. Some, again, fell on ground which, though deep and rich, was unweeded; and when it sprouted, the tender shoots were choked by a rank growth of thistles. The rest fell on soil soft and deep and clean, and it grew and ripened and yielded a plenteous harvest, here an hundredfold, there sixtyfold, and elsewhere only thirtyfold, since even the good ground varied.

As He afterwards interpreted it to the Twelve, the parable was a retrospect of His first year's ministry and an estimate of its results. He had sowed the good seed of the Word far and wide, and oftentimes, like the seed on the beaten pathway, it had fallen on unreceptive souls and never taken root; oftentimes, like the seed on the shallow soil, on emotional souls quickly responsive but as quickly discouraged; and oftentimes, like the seed on the unclean ground, on souls where the roots of unholy passions and worldly ambitions clung and soon choked the tender growth by their rank luxuriance.

Had this been all, it had been a sorry tale of disappointment and failure; but there remained the abundant harvest which the good ground had borne. There had been much in His ministry to discourage, but there had been more to cheer; and He added a

series of instructive parables regarding the progress of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Husbandry is a business requiring patience and faith. The harvest does not follow the sowing immediately. The sower casts his seed upon the ground and leaves it there. He has done his part, and he can do no more ; but all the while day and night God is doing His part silent and unseen. The seed germinates, and by and by the shoots appear ; but still the harvest is far off : first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain, and at long last the harvest. " So is the Kingdom of God." His operation is ceaseless, independent of our feeble efforts. " So giveth He," says the Psalmist, " unto His beloved in sleep " ; or, as the ancient proverb has it, " while the fisherman sleeps the net is catching." Sow your seed, shoot your net, and leave the issue to God with a quiet heart.

And His Kingdom has ever small beginnings. It is like a grain of mustard—so small that it was proverbial in the East for a very minute thing, yet shooting up to quite a tree where the birds may nest. And its growth is gradual and imperceptible, like the working of the leaven in the mass of dough.

Thus alike in Nature and in Grace God's operations are slow, unresting yet unhasting ; and moreover they are liable to malignant opposition. A husbandman tilled his field and sowed his seed, and when the blades sprang up, rank weeds appeared among them. An enemy had sowed these. What should the husbandman do ? If he rooted out the darnel, he would uproot the wheat too. Better let both grow together until harvest, and then separate them. Even so a net



catches good fish and bad, and the fisherman waits till it is dragged ashore and then casts the bad away. Thus should we work on in the service of the Kingdom, enduring opposition and awaiting God's final judgment.

In such homely but pregnant parables the Lord discoursed to the multitude that evening by the Lake ; and then on getting home with the Twelve He unfolded their significance. " Have you understood all this ? " He inquired ; and when they answered " Yes," He exhorted them to diligence in learning the mysteries Cf. Mt. v. of His Kingdom, remembering that, as He 14-16. had told them at their ordination, they were called as His Apostles to be a light to the world. They were to be in the new order what the Scribes had been in the old—interpreters of God. Only they must not be, like the Scribes, mere retailers of a dead tradition but prophets of the Eternal, at once faithful to the heritage of the past and open to the larger truth which the Holy Spirit is ever bringing to light. " Every Scribe taught in the school of the Kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings forth from his store things new and things old."

## A RETREAT ACROSS THE LAKE

Mk. iv. 35-v. 20 ; Mt. viii. 18, 23-34 ; Lk. viii. 22-39.

It was now late, and they needed repose, especially the Master. For He had spent the previous night in prayer on the hillside, and all day He had been anxiously employed, first in ordaining His Apostles, then in disputing with the Pharisees, and then in discoursing by parables to the multitude and afterwards in expounding His parables to the Twelve. He sorely needed repose ; yet He did not retire to His couch. He would fain continue His instruction of the Twelve, and He foresaw that, if He remained at Capernaum, the morrow would bring fresh distraction. And therefore He had determined, late as it was, to withdraw from the town and seek a peaceful retreat where He might commune with them undisturbed. Whither should He go ? The previous year He had retired inland, but now His fame had spread and He would find no seclusion there. The eastern side of the Lake, so sparsely populated, He had never yet visited, and thither He would betake Himself.

They embarked in the boat which they kept in readiness for emergencies, and put off. It was late and their departure was unobserved, but they were not alone on the Lake. Night was the time for fishing, and as they stole on their way, they passed boats swinging by their nets. It was a long row of some seven miles ; and while His fisher-disciples

Cf. Mk.  
iii. 9.

plied the oars, the Master sat on the seat at the stern, a wooden thwart usually padded with leather, and so weary was He that He fell fast asleep.

The worst peril of the Lake is its liability to sudden tempests, soon spent but furious while they last, especially after a sultry day when the cool breeze from the western sea encounters the sultry atmosphere of the deep basin and is sucked whirling down the gorges. So it happened that night. A tempest broke—a hurricane of wind, as the old Greek lexicographer defines the Evangelists' term, with black, driving clouds and pelting rain. The Lake was lashed into fury, and the waves dashed over the frail craft. So weary was the Master that He slept on. "Lord," cried the disciples, "save! We are perishing." "Why," He remonstrated, "are you so afraid? How little faith you have!" Then, addressing the storm as though it were a raging beast, "Hush!" said He; "be muzzled!" His command was the will of God, the Eternal Creator. "The sea is His, and He Ps. xciv. 5; Pr. xxx. 4; made it"; He "hath gathered the wind in His Is. xl. 12. fists" and "measured the waters in the hollow of His hand"; and the wild elements obeyed. It was no natural subsidence—a gradual falling of the wind leaving a long, lingering swell; for, says the Evangelist, "the wind sank to rest, and there ensued a great calm."

The other boats had shared the peril, and their crews were amazed. They knew the Lake and had experienced many a tempest, but never had Cf. 1 Jo. iii. 1; 2 Pet. iii. 11. they known a storm pass thus. "What manner of man," they exclaimed, or more truly "what unearthly personage—a visitant from what realm—is this? Even the winds and the sea obey Him!"

The boat held on its way and came to land in the early morning near Gerasa, the modern *Kersa*. Elsewhere the eastern shore slopes gently, but here it drops sheer down into the Lake, and here they disembarked. The hillside promised a quiet retreat, and thither they betook themselves. As they went, they had a startling adventure. In those days lunatics were suffered to roam at large, and they frequently haunted burial-places ; and as Jesus and His company approached the burial-place of the town, still marked by the ruins of rock-hewn sepulchres, a lunatic rushed out upon them. He was a raging madman, the terror of the neighbourhood, all the more that according to the idea of the age his madness was ascribed to demoniacal possession. Attempts had been made to fetter him, but he had always burst his bonds, and he lurked there in the caverns of the dead, yelling and raving and lacerating his naked body. It appears that he knew Jesus. Frenzy so violent can hardly have been of long standing, and probably ere his seizure he had visited Capernaum and had there seen and heard the famous teacher whom the multitude acclaimed as the Messiah. And now on espying Him he conceived that He had come on an errand of judgment, and he ran to meet Him and with a wild cry knelt before Him.

It was an extreme case, and the Lord approached it after His accustomed manner, humouring the hallucination of the disordered brain. He addressed the supposed demon : " Come out of the man, you unclean spirit." Generally the command sufficed, the authority of His voice and look impressing the patient and persuading him that he was dispossessed ; but here

the frenzy was harder to master. The lunatic resisted. With that confusion of personality which the notion of possession created, he identified himself with the indwelling demon and answered in its character, deprecating the Messiah's vengeance: "Why are you troubling me, Jesus, Son of God Most High? I adjure you by God, do not torture me."

This the first attempt was unavailing. It had inspired terror in the crazed brain and would only aggravate its frenzy. And so the Lord tried another way. "What is your name?" He inquired by way of recalling to the man his proper identity. But the delusion persisted and, still speaking in the demon's character, the man replied that his name was "Legion," his notion being that he was possessed not by a single demon but by a whole regiment. It seemed as though the case were hopeless, but the Lord's strong and gracious personality was winning the mastery and in the moment of seeming defeat the madman capitulated. Feeding hard by on the common were herds of swine, some two thousand in all, and a wild idea presented itself to the disordered mind. The belief then was that the wilderness was the proper abode of evil spirits, and it was to escape from that drear exile that they took possession of men. They craved embodiment, and any sort of embodiment was better than none: if they could not obtain lodgement in men, they would seek it in beasts. This idea suggested a compromise to the maniac. Speaking for the army of demons which possessed him, he begged: "Since we must go out of the man, do not banish us from the country (from the fertile, populated country into the lone wilderness). Send us into yonder swine."

"Begone" answered the Lord. The maniac would leap up, and the creatures, already startled by his wild cries, rushed panic-stricken down the hillside and plunged over the precipice into the Lake.

And thus the Lord's merciful purpose was achieved. The man's hallucination was dispelled. Assuredly he was rid of the demons : they had entered the swine and been plunged into the Lake. Had he not seen it with his own eyes? His frenzy was soothed, and that was the beginning of his cure ; for he could now understand and surrender his troubled spirit to the Lord's healing grace.

On witnessing the destruction of their charges the swineherds hurried off to the town and the neighbouring farms and reported the disaster ; and presently an excited crowd appeared on the scene. There they beheld Jesus and the madman sitting at His feet, exhausted by his recent frenzy but a madman no longer. He was clothed—clothed, as the word signifies, with a mantle, lent him by one of the strangers, perhaps the Lord Himself, to cover his nakedness ; and he was perfectly sane. So amazing a transformation smote them with superstitious fear, and they durst not vent their indignation at the loss of their property ; but they would not harbour so dangerous a visitor, and they besought Jesus to quit their neighbourhood. He quietly betook Himself with His companions to the boat, and the man followed Him and, as He was getting on board, begged leave to accompany Him. But He refused. There was work for the man to do where he was, and he must prove his gratitude by facing every risk. "Go home," said He, "and tell your people what the Lord has done for you." The



man obeyed, and he did more than he was bidden. Not alone to his own people did he tell the story, but he travelled all over Decapolis publishing the grace of Jesus.

It was worth the Lord's while crossing the Lake to win so ardent a herald of His Kingdom, yet His immediate errand was frustrated. Amid the excitement which His miracle had aroused quiet converse with the Twelve was impossible, and He returned to Capernaum.

## BACK IN CAPERNAUM

Mk. v. 21-43 ; Lk. viii. 40-56 ; Mt. ix. 18-31.

ON His arrival He was enthusiastically received. The fishermen who had witnessed the stilling of the tempest the previous night, had told the story when they came ashore in the morning ; and when His boat was sighted rowing back across the Lake, the populace poured down to the harbour to welcome Him and escort Him home. His progress thither was stayed by the approach of an unusual sort of suppliant. He was a Ruler of the Synagogue, named Jair— Cf. Jud. x. “ one ruler ” says St. Matthew, thus tersely depicting the novel scene. He was a Pharisee, and the Pharisees were generally the Lord’s bitter enemies ; and in virtue of his official dignity he was an exalted personage. It was surprising that he should mingle with a jostling crowd, and still more surprising that, as they fell aside to let him pass, he approached Jesus and knelt down before Him.

What was it that had thus conquered his hostility and humbled his pride ? His only child, a little daughter twelve years of age, was lying at death’s door ; and, forgetting his prejudices in his sore distress, he had bethought himself of the despised Teacher who had wrought so many cures among the people, and had come to implore His succour. “ My little daughter,” he pleaded, “ is extremely ill. Pray come

and lay your hands on her, that she may be saved and live."

Without a word Jesus turned and accompanied the Ruler; and the crowd followed, pressing upon Him in their eagerness. There was no time to lose; for the child was dying. Jesus had healed many sick, but never yet had He raised one who was dead: and it seemed essential that He should arrive while the child still lived. There was no time to lose, and it would distress the anxious father when their hasty progress was interrupted. In the crowd there was a woman who for twelve long years had suffered from hemorrhage. Tradition has it that her name was Veronica; and the historian Eusebius tells that she belonged to the Phœnician town of Cæsarea Philippi just beyond the northern frontier of Galilee. In his day—early in the fourth century—there was a house there, reputed to have been hers, and before it stood a brazen statue of a man and a woman kneeling at his feet with outstretched hands—the monument which, it was said, she had erected in grateful commemoration of her meeting with the Lord. It may have been authentic. Certainly the woman was a Gentile; for there was

*Cf. Lev.* ceremonial defilement in her malady, and no  
*xv. 19-30.* Jewess so afflicted durst have mingled with the crowd. And it is written that among the visitors

*Mk. iii.* attracted by the Lord's fame to Capernaum  
*7, 8.* when He began His second year's ministry there were some from Phœnicia.

Being a despised Gentile, and shrinking, moreover, from disclosing her hidden malady, the woman would not openly approach Jesus, and she had mingled with the crowd in the hope of winning a cure by stealth.

In her heathen fashion she regarded Him as a magical personage, and fancied that there was a healing efficacy in mere contact with Him, were it only touching His clothes. It was indeed a superstitious notion, but there was faith in it, and faith, however blind and ignorant, never misses its reward. She pushed through the throng till she got close behind Him, and then she clutched the tassel of His mantle; and instantly her hemorrhage ceased.

Cf. Ac. xix.

11, 12.

Cf. Num.

xv. 38-40;

Dt. xxii.

12.

He had felt the clutch of her nervous fingers, and recognising it amid the pressure of the crowd as a suppliant's appeal, He turned and asked "Who grasped Me?" He espied the woman, "trembling like a guilty thing surprised." Concealment was impossible, and she knelt down before Him and confessed all. He might have respected her reserve and spared her the exposure, but He had a better blessing for her than the healing of her hemorrhage, even the benediction of His grace. "Daughter," said He, "your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

The words were on His lips when a messenger arrived from the Ruler's house to tell him that his child was dead and it was useless to bring the Teacher. He could do nothing now. "Fear not," said Jesus; "only have faith." The house was close by, and bidding the rest of His disciples remain with the crowd He took Peter and James and John with Him and entered. A distressful scene confronted Him—a troupe of professional mourners beating their breasts and bewailing the dead. Such was the ancient custom, still maintained in Palestine; but despite its familiarity it pained the Master with His knowledge of the

Eternal Loving-kindness which divests death of its terror and reveals it as "the gate of life," a falling asleep to awake in the light of the Father's face. "Why," He asked, "are you making a din and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." They answered with bitter laughter, and He turned them out of the house. Then with His three companions He followed the father and mother into the chamber where the child was lying, and grasping her hand He said in the kindly Aramaic vernacular: *Talitha kum*, which means "My lamb, rise"—the endearing phrase of a mother when she woke her child. And the child obeyed. "She immediately arose and," says the Evangelist, "walked about." She had "fallen asleep" in mortal weakness, wasted by sickness; and she awoke well and strong, her sickness gone, her health restored. The parents were amazed. They could scarce believe it true until He bade them give the child food; and when they saw her eat, then they realised that she was indeed alive.

So startling a miracle would occasion infinite wonderment; and, dreading the inevitable commotion, He enjoined reticence and quietly took His departure. He was very weary, since His brief slumber in the stern of the boat, so rudely broken by the tempest, was the only rest which He had enjoyed all last night; and He would fain get home. Among the loiterers about the Ruler's gate were two blind men, and on His emergence they raised an appealing cry: "Have pity on us, Son of David!" It was the Messianic title so constantly on the lips of the multitude and so distasteful to the Lord by reason of the false idea which it expressed and the idle expectation which it

encouraged ; and He paid no heed. They followed Him, still clamouring : “ Have pity on us, Son of David ! ” and so resolute were they that, when He reached home, they pressed in after Him. Their importunity moved Him, bespeaking as it did not only their sore need but the faith which, however ignorantly, they reposed in Him ; and now that they were within doors He might grant their petition unobserved by the multitude. “ You have faith,” said He, “ that I can do this ? ” “ Yes, sir,” they answered. His compassion overflowed, and since they could not see His face and read there the sympathy that was in His heart, He passed His kind hand for a token over their eyes. “ According to your faith,” said He, “ be it done to you ” ; and their eyes were opened.

Then He bethought Himself of the stir which would arise were the miracle reported ; and His manner changed. “ He frowned upon them.” “ See ! ” said He ; “ let no one get to know of it.” He would have had them steal away unnoticed ; but they could not contain their gladness. They went out of doors and told the story, and it was carried all over the town and beyond it.



## A MISSION IN SOUTHERN GALILEE

Mk. vi. 1*a*. Lk. vii. 36-50. Lk. viii. 1-3, iv. 16 30; Mk. vi. 1*b*-6*a*; Mt. xiii. 53-58. Mk. vi. 6*b*-13; Mt. ix. 35-x. 1, 5-16, 24-42; Lk. ix. 1-6 (x. 2-12, 16, vi. 40, xii. 2-9, 51-53, xvii. 33). Mt. xi. 1; Lk. vii. 11-17. Mt. xi. 2-19; Lk. vii. 18-35 (xvi. 16). Mk. vi. 21-29; Mt. xiv. 6-12.

AMID the commotion which those three miracles, especially the resuscitation of the Ruler's child, would inevitably excite, it was impossible for our Lord to prosecute His ministry at Capernaum; and He left it on a mission which He had long contemplated. It was nearly two years since He had left His early home at Nazareth to meet with John the Baptist at Bethabara, and He had never returned thither. His message would hardly have found acceptance there at the outset of His ministry; for was it not proverbial that "a prophet has no honour among his own people"? and had He not painful evidence thereof in the incredulity of His "brethren" regarding His Messianic claims? Hence He had hitherto avoided Nazareth and the adjacent country. But now that He had established His fame at Capernaum and had, moreover, in that memorable circuit of last year, proclaimed His message in northern Galilee, was it not time that He should visit Nazareth and its environs?

The road thither lay along the Lakeside as far as Magdala, whence it struck inland; and there surely was the scene of a memorable incident which the other

Evangelists omit and St. Luke records *con amore* yet with a local and personal reticence very intelligible in the light of the subsequent narrative. Magdala had an evil reputation. It was a wealthy town, and it was stricken with the plague which wealth too often brings. It was in Palestine what Corinth was in Greece, and "a Magdalene"—the calumnious epithet wherewith the Talmud brands the Blessed Virgin—meant "an harlot."

It was probably on Friday evening that our Lord arrived at Magdala, and He would stay there over the Sabbath and attend the synagogue. His fame had preceded Him, especially the story of His raising Jair's child from the dead. It had reached the ears of a Pharisee in the town named Simon; and, rigid Pharisee though he was, he could not but bestow some recognition on the Teacher who had so marvelously succoured his colleague at Capernaum. Sabbath was the day which among the Jews was specially devoted to the friendly rites of hospitality, and he invited Jesus to a banquet in his house. Cf. Lk. xiv. 1.

It was kindly enough meant, yet it was ungraciously done. The custom was that when a guest arrived a servant should receive him with a basin and a towel, and, taking off his sandals, lave his dusty feet; then the host greeted him with a kiss of welcome; and afterwards, as he reclined at table, cool, fragrant ointment was poured on his head. Simon's other guests would be accorded those common courtesies, but they were withheld from Jesus. It was deemed sufficient honour for Him that He was admitted to the Pharisee's house and board.

At the moment He ignored the indignity ; but He observed it, and presently it received a merited rebuke. As He entered, a woman had stolen in after Him. There was no mistaking what sort she was ; for she was unveiled and her hair hung loose, and this was the badge of an harlot. What did she there in that holy company ? She had been told of the Friend of sinners and what He had done elsewhere for the like of her ; she may have heard Him preaching in Capernaum ; perhaps she had heard Him in the synagogue that very day. And His grace had won her poor heart. Fain to meet with Him, she followed Him to the Pharisee's house with a gift in her hand. It was "a vase of myrrh" ; and according to the satirist Lucian this was common as an harlot's *douceur*. The price of her shame was all that she had, and she would make it an offering to the Lord. The company was at table, reclining on couches set slantwise round it ; and she timidly approached the Lord's couch, meaning to pour the ointment on His head, but her courage failed her and, pausing at the outer end of the couch, she stooped over His neglected feet. Her hot tears rained down upon them, and she gently wiped them with her loose tresses, and fondly kissed them and poured the ointment over them.

Simon was shocked. To his Pharisaic mind there was pollution in the creature's touch ; and surely, he thought, had Jesus known her character, He would never have tolerated her caresses. Certainly He was no prophet or He would have recognised what sort of woman she was. Our Lord saw the look of horror on his face and knew what he was thinking. "Simon," said He, "I have something to say to you." "Say

it, Teacher," was the curt reply ; and Jesus told of a creditor who had two debtors. One of them owed him £25 and the other £2, 10s., and as neither could pay, he freely forgave them both. " Now which of them will love him the more ? " " I suppose," answered Simon frigidly, resenting what seemed to him mere trifling, " the one whom he forgave the more." " Precisely," said Jesus, and pointed the moral. " You see this woman ? I came into your house : you gave Me no water for My feet, but she wetted My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hairs. No kiss did you give Me, but since I came in she has never ceased fondly kissing My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with myrrh. And for this reason, I tell you, her sins, her many sins, are forgiven—because she loved much. But one who is forgiven little loves little."

Here is at once the Lord's self-vindication and His condemnation of Simon. It was neither because He was ignorant of her character nor because He had no abhorrence of sin that He had accepted the woman's caresses, but because it was penitence and gratitude that had brought her to His feet. She so loved Him because she had seen His grace ; and since love is supremely precious in God's sight, she was nearer to God than the proud Pharisee who had never discovered " the plague of his own heart."

" Your sins are forgiven " said He to the penitent crouching at His feet. It was blasphemy in the judgment of Pharisees that He should thus arrogate the divine prerogative of absolution, and a murmur ran round the table. He paid no heed, but dismissed

the woman with a gracious assurance : " Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Who was this woman ? In his kindly charity, since he would not blazon the shameful past of one whom the Lord raised to honour, the Evangelist has concealed her name ; but surely he knew it, and in after days it was firmly believed, at all events in the Latin Church, that she was none other

Lk. viii. 2. than Mary the Magdalene whom he presently introduces as a devoted disciple, and moreover that Mary the Magdalene was identical with Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. And this is more than an idle fancy. It is indubitably attested by the Evangelists, who, while tenderly solicitous for the honour of the dear home at Bethany, have yet, for the glory of the Saviour's grace, taken care that the truth should be clearly revealed to reverent and studious eyes. Consider the evidence.

There is no manner of doubt that Mary the Magdalene had been a sinful woman. Her designation proclaims it. And in introducing her immediately after his story of the sinful woman in the Pharisee's house, St. Luke styles her " Mary the Magdalene, as she was called, from whom seven demons had gone out." Cf. Mt. xii. 45; Lk. xi. 26. Immorality was, in ancient parlance, an unclean spirit, and sevenfold possession signified utter abandonment.

Mary the Magdalene, then, had been an harlot ; but what reason is there for identifying her with the sinful woman in Simon's house and with Mary of Bethany ? In his story of the raising of Lazarus St. John introduces him as the brother of Mary and her sister

Martha, and then explains that the former was "the Mary who anointed the Lord with myrrh and wiped His feet with her hair." St. Augustine takes this as a reference to the memorable incident recorded by St. Luke and thus as an express identification of Mary of Bethany with the sinful woman in the Pharisee's house. And probably he is right; yet it may be that the Evangelist was referring not to that previous anointing but rather to the subsequent anointing at Bethany a few weeks later. And thus the identification of Mary of Bethany with the sinful woman would remain so far precarious; but in his story of the anointing at Bethany St. John has put it beyond question. It would have been nothing remarkable had Mary, eager to bear a part in doing honour to the Master, come into the banquet-room and anointed His head with her precious ointment; but it was very remarkable that she came in with her hair unbound after the fashion of an harlot, and that she did not anoint His head but poured her myrrh over His feet and wiped them with her hair. And what is the explanation? It is surely this—that her act was no customary tribute of honour but a grateful reminiscence of her first meeting with the Saviour on that memorable day at Magdala when, a poor outcast, she knelt at His blessed feet in the Pharisee's house.

Certainly Mary of Bethany was that sinful woman. And as certainly she was Mary the Magdalene; else where was she at the tragic close? As Mary of Bethany she never appears in the narrative of the Passion. Was she sitting quietly in her home just over the crest of Olivet while they were nailing her dear Lord

Jo. xi. 2.

Jo. xii.  
1-11; cf.  
Mt. xxvi.  
6-13; Mk.  
xiv. 3-9.



to the Cross? Nay, she was with Him then; for she was Mary the Magdalene, and Mary the Magdalene followed Him to Calvary, stood beside the Cross, and helped to take down His mangled body and lay it in Joseph's sepulchre—the last to leave Him and the first to greet Him on the Resurrection-morning.

The Lord had not come to Magdala alone. He was accompanied not only by the Twelve but by a band of womenfolk who had experienced His grace and had devoted themselves to the service of Him and His Kingdom. One of these was Joanna, the wife of Chuzas, the steward of the Tetrarch Herod Antipas, cf. Jo. iv. 46-54. probably, as we have seen, that "nobleman" whose child He had healed at the beginning of His Galilean ministry; and another was Susanna, of whom nothing is recorded save that, like Joanna and the rest, she was a debtor to His mercy. They were all ladies of means; and here lay their opportunity. The Master possessed nothing, and the Twelve had left their worldly all to follow Him; and those women attended the mission to supply their necessities. They would aid also in other ways; and here at the outset they rendered a gracious service by receiving the Magdalene into their company and removing her from the scene of her shame.

From Magdala they travelled on to Nazareth, a distance of nigh twenty miles. There the Lord was none too graciously received. The Nazarenes, as we have seen, had an ill repute in the land, and they were jealous of their townsman's fame. Who was He to have attained such greatness? Like His father before Him, He had been a carpenter among them, and His mother Mary and His brothers and sisters

were their neighbours. And why had He settled at Capernaum? Why had He not rather remained at Nazareth and wrought His miracles there?

Thus sneeringly and reproachfully was He greeted. The Sabbath came round, and He attended the synagogue and was invited to preach. The lesson from the Prophets for that day was a passage from the Book of Isaiah, and according to custom He took His text thence: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach Is. lxi. 1,  
2, lvi. 6. good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the broken at liberty, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." He read the gracious words and His gracious accents arrested His audience. Every eye was fixed upon Him as He laid aside the sacred roll and according to the Jewish custom sat down to discourse. "To-day," He began, "has this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." It was a gracious text, and it was a gracious sermon; and His hearers felt its charm. Yet no sooner was it ended than they were mastered by their miserable jealousy. He marked their glances and whisperings and, knowing well what was in their minds, He answered their grievance.

It was a kindly, half-playful answer, designed to disarm their prejudice. Their grievance, He admits, was quite natural. "No doubt you will be quoting to Me the proverb 'Physician, heal yourself.' You have been hearing of My miracles at Capernaum, and you would like Me to work similar miracles here. But is there not another proverb which says that 'no prophet is acceptable in his own country'?" It was a gentle rebuke. There can be no miracle where there

is no faith, and it was their unbelief that had banished Him from their midst. When people turn away a blessing from their doors, it passes to others Cf. I Ki. xviii. 8-24. who are willing to receive it. So it had happened long ago when Elijah left idolatrous Israel and carried his blessing to a poor widow at Cf. 2 Ki. v. Zarephath in the land of Zidon, and again when, though there were lepers in Israel, it was Naaman the Syrian that Elisha healed.

His argument, instead of winning them, only enraged them. Though it was written in the Scriptures, it offended their Jewish prejudices to hear of heathen being preferred to Israelites; and they thought it no less than blasphemy that He should liken Himself to those great prophets. The synagogue was in an uproar. They drove Him out of the town to a precipice on the mountain beneath which it nestled, meaning to hurl Him down; but when they got there, they thought better of it. His dauntless bearing overawed them; perhaps old memories softened them. He turned away, and the crowd fell back before Him and let Him pass.

He would betake Himself with His company into the open country. His treatment at Nazareth had grieved Him, but it awoke no resentment in His breast. It showed how much His Gospel was needed, and His heart went out in compassion to the ignorant people. The time was short, and He would essay a fresh enterprise. He had chosen and ordained the Twelve not merely as His successors but as His fellow-workers, and He had been training them by His teaching and example; and now, since the need was so great and the time so short, that His Gospel might

reach the farther and accomplish the more, He would send them abroad two by two to proclaim the message which He had taught them and work miracles in His name.

Had they the heart for the enterprise? "The harvest," said He, "is large, but the workers few. Pray then the Lord of the harvest to cast forth workers to His harvest." It was a challenge to their faith and devotion. "Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?" was His appeal, and surely they would answer like the prophet of old: "Here am I; send me." He waited for a response; and when none volunteered, He compelled them: He "cast them forth to His harvest." He had already ordained them, and now He commissions them.

Their field meanwhile was narrow. He was indeed the Saviour of the world, and the time would come when they must carry His Gospel to the ends of the earth; but for the present they were engaged in a mission to southern Galilee, and they must confine themselves within these limits. They must not go away among the Gentiles or even visit a city of Samaria, as they might readily have done, since the Samaritan frontier lay less than ten miles to the south, and the distant prospect of Mount Gerizim would recall to them how the Master had been received at Sychar at the beginning of His ministry. For the present their concern was with those poor "lost sheep of the house of Israel" in southern Galilee.

It was a difficult and perilous enterprise, demanding faith and courage. Poor as they were in worldly wealth, they must expect hardship; and, remembering their experience at Nazareth, they must reckon

on hostility. But their message would surely win them friends ; and at the worst they had this to cheer them—that they were only sharing their Master's lot, and that God was with them—the Father who marked the fall of a sparrow and numbered the very hairs of their heads.

They went their several ways, and the Lord went His. There is no clear record of His ensuing movements and doings, since the Twelve were not with Him to see and hear and tell the story afterwards ; but the women were with Him, and St. Luke has preserved one gracious incident which would appeal peculiarly to them and which the Gentile Evangelist, with his characteristic interest in despised womenfolk, may have learned in their circle. Evidently some time had elapsed, since the Lord had won fresh disciples. Accompanied by these and the women and followed by a curious throng, He approached the town of Nain some six miles south-east of Nazareth. The burial-place was situated, where its ruins still remain, eight furlongs from the town on the eastern side, and He encountered a funeral cortege on its way thither. It was a mournful spectacle. The deceased was a young lad, a widow's only son, and the townsfolk attended in large numbers to testify their sympathy. According to Jewish custom the procession was headed by the female mourners, since it was by woman that death had come into the world ; and conspicuous among them was the weeping mother. Her grief touched the Lord's heart. " Weep not " He said to her ; and, advancing to the bier, He laid an arresting hand upon it. The bearers stopped. " My lad," He said, " awake " ; and the lad sat up and, like one

suddenly aroused from sleep, exclaimed in surprise till he was silenced by his mother's embrace. The spectators were awe-stricken. They remembered the like miracle which Elisha had wrought of old at the neighbouring village of Shunem.

Cf. 2 Ki.  
iv. 8-37.

"A great prophet," said one, "has been raised among us." "God," said another, "has visited His people."

The wonderful story was noised abroad. It travelled as far as Judæa and its environs; and it reached the ears of John the Baptist in his dungeon in the Castle of Machærûs, where he had lain a prisoner since his arrest at Ænon by Herod Antipas at the beginning of our Lord's Galilean ministry. His only cheer all that weary space was that his disciples were allowed access to him. His supreme interest was the progress of the Kingdom which he had heralded and the doings of Him whom he had acclaimed at Bethabara as the Promised Saviour; and his disciples had kept him informed of "the works of the Messiah."

Cf. Mt.  
xi. 2.

The tidings which reached him from time to time puzzled him. The Lord's works were indeed gracious and wonderful, yet they were not the sort of works which he expected of the Messiah. What did he expect? Though he had risen above the secular ideal of his Jewish contemporaries, still his ideal fell far short of the truth. He pictured the Messiah as a stern reformer, axe and winnowing-fan in hand, hewing down iniquities and separating the chaff from the wheat, and at the same time as "the Lamb of God" shedding His blood in vicarious sacrifice for the sin of the world.

Cf. Mt. iii.  
10, 12.

Cf. Jo. i.  
29, 36.

And here lay the reason of his perplexity: Jesus was



performing neither rôle. He was no stern reformer, "striving and crying and lifting up His voice in the street," but a gracious teacher, telling of the Mt. xii. 19. Heavenly Father and His love and mercy. Nor was He as yet treading the martyr's path. He had indeed incurred the enmity of the rulers, but He was still the popular hero, followed by enthusiastic and acclaiming crowds. Far other, as John conceived, should be "the works of the Messiah"; and could it be, he was asking himself, that he had erred in his judgment at Bethabara?

And so he despatched two of his disciples from Machærûs to interview Jesus and request His decision. They found Him busy with the multitude and propounded their master's question: "Are you the Coming One? or are we to look for another?" He vouchsafed no immediate reply, but continued His work, healing the sick folk who had thronged about Him. And then He turned to the deputies. "Go," said He, "and report to John what you have seen and heard—that the blind are recovering sight, the lame are walking, the lepers are being cleansed, the deaf are hearing, the dead are being raised, and the Gospel is being preached to the poor. And blessed is the man who finds nothing to stumble at in Me."

It was truly a gracious and effective reply. Had He pronounced an authoritative verdict, categorically affirming His Messiahship, John might have accepted it, but his misgivings would have remained. He took a better way. He exemplified His works, and bade John judge of these and determine their significance. Whether they accorded with his expectation or no, were they not indubitably "the works of the

Messiah"—such works as only the Messiah could perform? And surely then it was his expectation that was at fault, and it became him to dismiss his prepossessions and accept the larger and nobler truth.

The multitude had observed the interview with lively interest; and they were disposed to judge the Baptist hardly, imputing his doubt to disheartenment. His long imprisonment, they fancied, had broken his morale; and the Lord's seeming severity encouraged their opinion. He knew their thought, and no sooner were the deputies gone than He reproved it and pronounced a generous eulogy on that great soul. Who that had seen John and heard him at Bethabara, so resolute, so dauntless, so austere, could think it possible that he was flinching now, bowing, like the reed in the fable, before the blast or under stress of durance yielding like a supple courtier to the tyrant's frown? He was indeed a prophet and, by reason of the part which he had played, the greatest of all the prophets, since he was that messenger promised of old, the reincarnate Elijah of Jewish expectation who should herald the Messiah's advent and prepare His way before Him.

This was the Baptist's unique distinction—that as the Messiah's herald he had inaugurated the Kingdom of Heaven. The era of the Law and the Prophets had lasted to his day, and he had ushered in the era of the Gospel. And here his limitation appeared. He had carried into the new era the spirit of the old—that spirit of violence which animated the Jewish people in those days and which found expression in their secular ideal of the Messiah as a victorious king and of His Kingdom as the ancient kingdom of David

restored in more than its ancient glory, and still more strongly in the revolutionary propaganda of the desperate Zealots. It animated even the Lord's disciples, who like their contemporaries were looking for the restoration of the kingdom of Israel and fretting, with ever increasing impatience, at His procrastination, as they deemed it, in laying aside His disguise and manifesting Himself to the world in His proper majesty. John had encouraged this ideal by his announcement of the Messiah as an indignant reformer, axe in hand : and his preaching had stimulated the spirit of violence. " Ever since his days the Kingdom of Heaven has been being stormed and stormers plundering it."

The Lord's pronouncement was ill received. The multitude were indeed pleased by His eulogy of the Baptist who had so stirred their souls in the great days of his ministry at Bethabara and Ænon ; but the inquisitorial Scribes resented it, remembering their old quarrel with the stern prophet. And even the multitude had a grievance against him for the austerity of his requirements, and they were offended, moreover, by the Lord's condemnation of their Messianic ideal. They fell to disputing, and He answered them with kindly raillery. Were they not an unreasonable generation ? There was no pleasing them. John had come among them, an austere ascetic, requiring repentance and fasting, and they had pronounced him mad—possessed by a spirit of melancholy. Then He came, the kindly Son of Man, not only sympathising with their sorrows but sharing their joys, an happy guest at their weddings and their banquets ; and His geniality offended them : they called Him " glutton "

and "winebibber," "friend of taxgatherers and sinners." Truly they were an unreasonable generation. They were like children playing in the marketplace and quarrelling over their games. One company wished to play at a wedding, and another would rather play at a funeral. "We piped to you," cried the one set, "and you did not dance." "We lamented," cried the other, "and you did not beat your breasts."

It would be pleasant to think that the Baptist received the Lord's answer to his appeal, but it is doubtful. For just then, perhaps ere his messengers reached Machærûs, his brave life was cruelly ended. Herodias, with a woman's vindictiveness, thirsted for the blood of the fearless prophet who had denounced her shameful union with Herod Antipas; but so impressed was the Tetrarch by his character that he had hitherto resisted her importunities. Now at length she gained her end by a crafty trick. Antipas was celebrating his birthday with a state-banquet in his magnificent castle of Machærûs, and she laid a plot with her daughter by Philip, her deserted husband. The girl's name, as the Jewish historian mentions, was Salome; and in the course of the festivity she entered the banquet-hall in the guise of a *danseuse*. Her performance delighted the company, and the maudlin host, who, though but a petty vassal of imperial Rome, aped regal dignity, pledged himself in the style of an oriental potentate to grant her whatever boon she might name. She hastened out to consult her mother, and then returned and made her demand. "I desire," said she, "that you forthwith give me on a trencher the head of John the Baptist."

Cf. Esth.  
v. 6.

The atrocious request sobered Antipas, and he would fain have refused. But he durst not, since an oath was inviolable ; and he dispatched an officer of his bodyguard on the grim errand. Presently the trencher arrived with its ghastly burden, and the girl bore it off to her expectant mother, who, it is reported, in emulation of the fiendish revenge which Fulvia had wreaked on dead Cicero, pierced with a bodkin the silent tongue which had reproved her iniquity.

The Baptist's disciples obtained their master's mutilated corpse and gave it reverent burial. Tradition says that they conveyed it to Sebaste, the ancient city of Samaria ; and this is indeed probable, since Sebaste was near Ænon, the scene of his later ministry, and it was fitter that his mortal remains should rest in the unhallowed soil of Samaria than in the unkindly territory of the tyrant. Sebaste was not far from the southern frontier of Galilee, and after performing their mournful office they sought the Lord and told Him the tragic story. He would then have little heart to continue His mission, and in any case it was nearing its appointed close. Capernaum was the rendezvous where the scattered Apostles would reassemble, and thither He now betook Himself.

## ANOTHER RETREAT ACROSS THE LAKE

Mk. vi. 14-16, 30-52 ; Mt. xiv. 1, 2, 13-33 ; Lk. ix. 7-17 ; Jo. vi. 1-21.

HE was back in Capernaum, but not to stay there. The tragic death of the Baptist was not merely a heavy sorrow to Him ; it was a premonition of the doom which awaited Himself and which, in view of the increasing enmity of the powerful rulers, could not be long delayed. John had fallen a victim, and "so also," He recognised, "would the Son of Man soon suffer at their hands." He was unalarmed by the dread prospect ; for was it not ordained that He should die, a sacrifice for the sin of the world ? But meanwhile there was work for Him to do. The Twelve still needed instruction, especially regarding the significance of His Passion ; and therefore it was imperative that, as soon as they rejoined Him, He should carry them off to some quiet retreat, all the more that He found Himself at this juncture menaced by a double embarrassment.

On the one hand, the fame of His miracles in southern Galilee had reached the ears of Herod Antipas, and it had shaken his guilty soul with superstitious alarm. His crime lay heavy on his conscience, and when he heard of the Lord's doings, his fancy was that surely this could be none other than that "righteous and holy man" raised from the dead and armed, as befitted a visitant from the unseen, with supernatural powers. He desired a personal

Cf. Mt.  
xvii. 12.

Cf. Mk. vi.  
20.



interview; and our Lord recognised the risk He ran, if He remained in Capernaum, of being carried before the Tetrarch and the contumely which would be wreaked upon Him when the tyrant discovered his mistake and the groundlessness of his alarm.

Nor was this the only embarrassment which menaced Him. The popular enthusiasm, augmented by those two transcendent miracles—His raising of Jair's child from the dead just before His departure from Capernaum and His recent raising of the widow's son at Nain—was portentous; and He remarked a singular activity among His followers—a continual coming and going, covert communing, and mysterious whispering. Plainly some stealthy purpose was afoot, and presently He discovered what it was. Persuaded of His Messiahship and impatient of His tardiness in putting off His lowly disguise and taking His throne, they were determined to precipitate the grand *dénouement*. The Cf. Jo. vi. 15. Passover was approaching, and they would then convey Him to the Sacred Capital and in presence of the assemblage of worshippers acclaim Him King of Israel and set Him on the throne of His father David.

It were indeed well for Him to quit Capernaum and seek a retreat; and it would be a relief to Him when His Apostles appeared. They were full of their experience, but He cut their stories short. "Come away by yourselves," said He, "to a lonely place and rest a little." He had fixed His destination—that broad champaign skirting the north-east of the Lake. It was a pleasant spot, watered by numerous streams and now in the spring-time thick spread with soft green grass. And it offered a peaceful retreat, since

it was sparsely peopled save for the town of Bethsaida Julias at the northern extremity, over a mile inland, close to the upper Jordan ; and, belonging to the tetrarchy of Philip, it was beyond the jurisdiction of Antipas.

They sailed across, a distance of some five miles, and on disembarking betook themselves to the upland overlooking the plain. The Lord loved the mountains, and there He found a convenient retreat, where He seated Himself and discoursed to the Twelve. By and by they were surprised by the sight of a huge crowd streaming over the plain. The people had seen Him setting sail from Capernaum, and had hurried after Him afoot round the head of the Lake. It was an unwelcome interruption, and He might have stolen away further into the uplands and escaped their quest ; but He had not the heart to treat them thus. For they were truly a pathetic spectacle—a multitude of some five thousand men besides women and children. They were weary with their long travel, and some of them were sick and had come for healing. He left His retreat, and descended to the plain and greeted them kindly, talking to them of the Kingdom of God and healing the sick.

It was evening ere He was done, and they were hungry. A Jew always carried provisions when he went on a journey lest he should have to eat unclean food, and his bread-basket (*kophinos*) was the badge of a Jewish traveller and the butt of Gentile derision. The Twelve had their baskets, but those poor folk in their haste had come unprovided. And now they were famished. They must have food, and the disciples suggested dismissing them on the chance of their procuring

it at the neighbouring villages and farms. But that would have been a sorry chance; and not only would the Lord succour the multitude but He recognised an opportunity of initiating the Twelve into a sacred mystery. He turned to Philip, the purveyor of the Apostle-company, and appealed to him: "Where can we buy loaves for them to eat?" It was impossible, and Philip demonstrated it by a rough estimate. The crowd, as he reckoned, numbered over six thousand, and a day's wage at that period was a *denarius*. An average household numbered five, and half the day's wage went for food—three meals. Cf. Mt. xx. 2. If a day's food for five cost half a *denarius*, two hundred *denarii* would barely furnish a single meal for over six thousand. Here Andrew interposed, corroborating what his friend Philip had said. Though they had the money, there was no market. A merchant had indeed appeared on the scene—a peasant lad who had come in the hope of trading with the crowd; but all he had was five coarse barley-loaves and two little dried fishes.

"Bring them to Me," said the Lord. He directed that the people should recline on the sward, and the Twelve for convenience in serving them disposed them by tens in companies of fifty to an hundred. It was an orderly arrangement; and, as St. Mark puts it, the groups with their parti-coloured garments on the soft green grass resembled the "ranks" or parterres of a garden. When they were all in place, the Lord first looked up to Heaven and blessed the provision, then broke it and gave the portions to the Twelve for distribution. As He dispensed it, the provision grew in His hands; nor was it spent when the whole

multitude had eaten and were satisfied. At His bidding the Twelve put the remaining fragments in their baskets, and every basket was filled.

The miracle had a distressful consequence. It was a fresh evidence of His Messiahship, and the enthusiasts who had been plotting a *coup d'état* at the approaching Passover, were emboldened in their wild design and were meditating its immediate execution by there and then acclaiming Him King. Perceiving their intention, He insisted on the Twelve re-embarking and setting sail for Capernaum without Him; and then, extricating Himself from the multitude, He escaped to the uplands. There He concealed Himself and unburdened His troubled heart in prayer.

The night closed boisterously with a strong westerly wind; but, engrossed in heavenly communion, He was unconscious of the elemental strife until, at the beginning of the fourth night-watch (3-6 A.M.), He descried the boat deep-laden, since the Twelve had taken some others with them on the homeward passage, only half-way across, struggling against the tempest. He went to their aid. To their amazement they beheld Him approaching over the Lake, walking on the rough water as on firm ground. They fancied it was a ghost until He got near and accosted them: "Courage! It is I; do not fear." "Lord," cried Peter after his impulsive fashion, "if it be you, bid me come to you on the water." "Come," said the Lord, and Peter stepped overboard. His courage failed him, and as he sank he exclaimed: "Lord, save me!" Jesus reached out His hand and grasped him. "How small your faith is!" said He. "Why did you doubt?" No sooner had they got

Cf. Mt.  
xiv. 33.

on board than the wind fell, and the boat sped swiftly to the harbour.

It was an amazing experience, and the people in the boat recognised it as a further proof of His Messiahship. "Truly," they confessed, bowing before Him, "you are the Son of God." But neither they nor the Twelve realised as yet the significance of the two miracles which they had witnessed. They had yet to learn the interpretation of them.

## BACK IN CAPERNAUM

Jo. vi. 22-71. Mk. vi. 53-vii. 23 ; Mt. xiv. 34-xv. 20 (Lk. vi. 39, 40).

WHEN the Lord had made His escape to the uplands and the Twelve had embarked and put off for Capernaum, taking with them as many others as the boat would accommodate, most of the crowd dispersed and made their way homeward round the head of the Lake. Not a few, however, remained—those enthusiasts who were bent on acclaiming Him King. His disappearance frustrated their intention for the moment ; and observing that He did not embark with the Twelve, they inferred that He was lurking in the vicinity and remained in the hope of discovering Him. They searched for Him in vain, and in the morning, finding on the beach a number of boats belonging to Tiberias—probably a fishing fleet which had put in for shelter from the storm—they had themselves conveyed by these across the Lake and so got home to Capernaum.

That day there was a service in the synagogue. It was not the Sabbath, else they would not have made the journey across the Lake, but either Monday or Thursday, the two week-days when the congregation assembled. On repairing to the synagogue they were surprised to find Jesus there. How had He come ? They had seen the Twelve leave the further shore last evening without Him, nor had He crossed with themselves that morning. A week-day service



was somewhat informal, and they questioned Him. A conversation ensued, and the Lord availed Himself of the opportunity to unfold the significance of His two miracles. These were prophetic of His Death and His Resurrection, and in unfolding their significance He had a twofold purpose. First He would discover to the Twelve and all others who could receive it the mystery of His approaching Passion, "the sufferings which awaited Messiah and the glories which should follow these." And then at all hazards He would check the misguided enthusiasm of the multitude and deal, if He might, a death-blow to their mischievous expectation of a worldly kingdom.

Even as He wrought the miracle of feeding the multitude the Lord had revealed the thought of His heart. It is written by all our Evangelists that "He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looked up to Heaven and blessed them and broke them, and gave them to the disciples"; and surely it is not without significance that they employ the self-same language in telling how on the night of His betrayal He instituted the Sacrament of the Supper which is at once a commemoration and an interpretation of His death. And what does this mean? It means that already He was thinking of His death and anticipating the sacred memorial which He would institute. None of that vast multitude nor even the Twelve would catch His meaning at the moment, but now in the synagogue of Capernaum He unfolds it.

He began with a rebuke. What had appealed to them and assured them of His Messiahship was His supplying their physical want—"perishing food."

They were oblivious of the spiritual boon whereof that was but a token and which as the Messiah He was offering them—"the enduring food which nourishes eternal life." This puzzled them. The Rabbinical interpreters had recognised in Moses a prototype of the Messiah. He was "the former Redeemer," and all that he had done foreshadowed what "the latter Redeemer" would do. Thus they interpreted the manna in the wilderness. As Moses had given their fathers bread from Heaven, so would the Messiah when He appeared; and had not the Lord by His miracle yester-eve fulfilled this promise? Surely His feeding of the multitude with "perishing food" was an evidence of His Messiahship. He answered that the manna which Moses gave their fathers was merely "perishing food," a symbol of the true "bread from Heaven," "the enduring food which nourishes eternal life." And this was God's gift. It was the gift which the Messiah would bring and which as the Messiah He was offering.

"I," said He, "am the bread of life." What did this mean? It was a Jewish phrase. The Rabbis spoke of "eating the Messiah" in the sense of eagerly receiving Him, welcoming His grace, assimilating His doctrine, and imbibing His spirit. Our Lord was the Messiah. He is "the bread of life"; and even as we nourish our bodies by eating "perishing food," so we nourish our souls by eating Him—by coming to Him and believing in Him. "He who comes to me shall never hunger and he who believes in Me shall never thirst any more." He will have eternal life within him, and there will be no death for him. "I will raise him at the last day."

Thus far the conversation had been between our Lord and those enthusiasts who were leading the popular movement ; but here interposed " the Jews," that is, in St. John's phraseology, the Jewish rulers, the Scribes who occupied the front seats in the synagogue and had been listening to the discussion. His language seemed to them sheer blasphemy. " Is not this," said they, " Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know ? " He took up their challenge, and first, quoting from the scriptures, Is. liv. 13 ; whereof they were the official guardians and cf. Jer. xxxi. 33, interpreters, that prophetic word " They shall 34. all be taught of God," He told them that the reason of their blindness to His claim was their lack of that heavenly teaching. And then He reiterated His claim in more emphatic terms. " I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. I am the true manna, the living bread : if one eat of this bread, he will live for ever. And," He added, " the bread which I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." Here is an intimation of His sacrificial death. The Rabbis spoke of " eating the Messiah," which signified merely feeding upon His teaching ; but here our Lord declares that " the enduring food which nourishes eternal life " is more than His teaching ; it is His atoning sacrifice, " His flesh for the life of the world."

It is hardly surprising that they missed His meaning, though surely in view of their own familiar phrase they might have caught something of it. They took His words in crude literalness. " How," they exclaimed, " can this man give us His flesh to eat ? " " Yes," He replied, reaffirming and elaborating what

He had said, " unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have not life in yourselves. My flesh is true food and My blood is true drink ; and one who eats this bread will live for ever : I will raise him at the Last Day."

Thus in the familiar terms of their Jewish theology He interpreted His miracle of the feeding of the multitude, seeking to raise their thoughts from the perishing food to the enduring food which nourishes eternal life—the rich grace of His atoning sacrifice. And what did He mean by that reiterated assurance that every one who eats of this living bread He will " raise at the Last Day " ? Here He had in view that other miracle which the Twelve and their companions in the storm-tossed boat had witnessed that morning. Even as His feeding of the multitude was prophetic of His sacrificial Death, so His walking on the water was, as will by and by appear, prophetic of His Resurrection, the refashioning of the body of His humiliation into a body of glory. Of this Cf. Phil iii. 21. also He purposed speaking at large, thus interpreting both those transcendent miracles ; but His purpose was arrested. The criticism of the dull Scribes, their indignant objection to His claim that He had come down from Heaven and to that mystic phrase, the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood, swayed the minds of the assemblage and turned not a few against Him who had professed themselves His disciples. The congregation dispersed, and no enthusiastic crowd attended Him on His homeward way ; only the Twelve, and they followed Him bewildered by what they had heard and saddened by so sudden an eclipse of their Master's popularity. It seemed to

them a heavy disaster, and it grieved Him too that He had been so little understood. "Are you also," He asked them, "minded to go away?" "Lord," answered Simon, the disciple who loved Jesus, always impulsive but always true-hearted, "to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life; and we have believed, we are sure that you are the Holy One of God." He spoke for them all. They were indeed sorely perplexed, since His premonition of suffering and death was so contrary to their dream of an earthly triumph; yet nothing could shake their faith in His Messiahship born of their experience of His grace. Simon thought he was speaking for all his comrades, but there was one whose face belied his confidence—Judas the man of Kerioth. The Lord had been reading his heart, and He knew the treason which was already lurking there. "Did I not," said He, "choose you the Twelve? and one of you is a devil."

The defection of so many of His followers would please the rulers, since it was the good-will of the multitude that had hitherto restrained them from taking severe measures with Him, and it seemed that He was now at their mercy. Their triumph, however, was short-lived. Whether He were the Messiah or no, He was still the Friend of sinners, the Comforter of the sorrowful, and the Helper of the helpless. There were still sickness and suffering in Galilee, and there were still pity in His heart and healing in His hand. From near and far the afflicted gathered to Him and experienced His grace; and presently the popular enthusiasm was as ardent as ever. It chagrined His enemies to see their victim thus snatched from their grasp, and those Rabbinical inquisitors who for a year past had

been spying upon Him and reporting His doings to the authorities at Jerusalem, cast about for a *casus belli*.

This they soon found. Their unwritten law, "the Tradition of the Elders" as it was called, forbade eating without first washing the hands by pouring water over them to cleanse away the taint of contact with unhallowed things; and it is amazing how much store was set by this prescription. Eating with unwashed hands was likened to commerce with an harlot. It was punishable with excommunication, and it exposed the polluted dwelling to the visitation of the nocturnal fiend Shibta who suffocated children in their beds. It is told of Rabbi Akiba, that exemplar at once of Jewish patriotism and of Pharisaic scrupulosity, that one morning during the imprisonment which ended in his martyrdom his gaoler in bringing him his day's food stinted his allowance of water. "Give me water for my hands" said he ere eating to his attendant disciple. "My master," was the answer, "there is not sufficient here even for drinking." "What shall I do?" said the old Rabbi. "It is better for me to die than to transgress the commandments of the Elders." And he washed his hands and went thirsty.

This rite, like many other ceremonial observances, our Lord disregarded, and His disciples followed His example. The Scribes found some of them Cf. Lk. xi. 37, 38. eating without washing their hands, and they challenged Him: "Why do your disciples transgress the Tradition of the Elders?" They expected that He would excuse the transgression and thus expose Himself to a charge of sacrilegious innovation; but He dexterously turned the tables and crushed them with



a damning countercharge. They were aggrieved at His disciples for their transgression of a human ordinance, and all the while they were themselves transgressing a divine commandment. It was written Ex. xx. 12, in the Law of Moses: "Honour thy father xxi. 17. and thy mother" and "He that revileth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." And how was this duty of filial piety construed by the Tradition of the Elders? The Rabbis were subtle casuists, and they displayed their ingenuity in devising evasions of burdensome moral obligations. Thus, whatever was devoted to God was *corban*, a sacred offering, and it would have been sacrilege to divert it to other uses. If a man's parents sought his help in need and he grudged it, he had only to devote something of his available means to God, and then he might answer: "What you require is *corban*." It was but a small portion of their requirement that he had devoted, and after he had put this in the sacred treasury he retained all the rest. And so at the cost of an inconsiderable offering to God he escaped a larger sacrifice. "You hypocrites!" He cried; "you play-actors, hiding your villainy under a mask of piety! Beautifully do you set aside the commandment of God that you may keep your tradition." Then He turned and addressed the bystanders. "Listen," said He, "and understand. It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles the man. No, what comes out of the mouth—this it is that defiles the man."

The Scribes had been heavily worsted in the encounter. They had not a word to say, and they retired muttering vengeance on their audacious adversary.

The Twelve were alarmed for the consequences. "Do you know," said they, "that the Pharisees have taken offence at what you said?" He was unmoved. The Pharisees were the champions of a godless cause. It was doomed, and what could they do with God against them? "Every plant which My Heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. Let them go," He cried, surveying their retreating forms and quoting a common proverb: "they are blind guides of blind men; and if blind guide blind, both will tumble into a ditch."

He took His way home with the Twelve, and when they got there, Peter asked an explanation of His "parable," meaning His saying about what really defiles a man—not what goes into the mouth but what comes out of it. It was not a parable at all but a plain statement, and He wondered at the question. It proved how wedded the Twelve were to the Jewish notion of ceremonial defilement. "Are you too still without understanding?" He remonstrated, and patiently explained that it is not unclean food that defiles the soul but unclean thoughts. It is not the hands that need cleansing but the heart.



THE THIRD YEAR OF HIS MINISTRY



## A RETREAT TO PHŒNICIA

Jo. vii. 1. Mt. xv. 21-28; Mk. vii. 24-31a.

THAT year (28 A.D.) the Passover fell on March 29. It was already, as St. John observes, drawing near when our Lord made His retreat to the eastern side of the Lake; and according to the custom which He had followed ever since He was twelve years of age, He should now have set out on the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. But this year He would not attend the Feast. The risk was too great. Last year He had narrowly escaped arrest and arraignment before the Sanhedrin on the capital charge of blasphemy, and the hostility of the rulers had meanwhile been exasperated by the reports which had reached them of His doings in Galilee. They were bent on putting Him to death. Nor was this His sole apprehension. There was also the likelihood that, despite the temporary cooling of their ardour in the synagogue of Capernaum, the Galilean enthusiasts would carry out their wild project of acclaiming Him King in the Sacred Capital. This would have been disastrous. It would surely have fanned the ever smouldering embers of Messianic fanaticism and kindled another of those desperate insurrections so frequent in that unhappy period.

And therefore He would not attend the Feast. Neither would He remain at Capernaum. He desired a season of quiet communion with the Twelve. It



was for this that He had crossed over to the eastern side of the Lake, and His purpose had been frustrated by the pursuit of the multitude. So now He would seek some other and more distant retreat. Whither should He turn? Beyond the northern frontier of Galilee lay the country of Phœnicia, belonging in those days to the Roman Province of Syria. It was an heathen land, and there surely, far from the malignant rulers and the clamorous multitude, He would find seclusion. He betook Himself with the Twelve to the neighbourhood of the ancient city of Tyre, and there in some quiet village they procured a lodging.

It quickly appeared that not even in Phœnicia was He secure from interruption. The Phœnicians were a race of traders, and merchants who visited the Holy Land had brought home tidings of the wonderful Mk. iii. Healer; and it is written that there were 7, 8. people from the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon among the numerous strangers who had crowded to Capernaum at the beginning of His second year's ministry. His arrival excited lively interest. It was good news to the afflicted, and it soon brought a suppliant to His feet—a woman, a widow according to the Syriac Version of St. Mark's Gospel, who had an epileptic daughter—possessed, as the phrase was, by "an unclean spirit." Tradition has it that her name was Justa and her daughter's Bernice.

He had been abroad with the Twelve, conversing with them amid the pleasant solitude of hillside and woodland, and now at eventide they were returning to their lodging when the woman approached. "Have pity on me," she cried, "O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is sorely possessed." He paid no heed, Not

that He did not care, but He had come thither seeking seclusion, and if He healed this sufferer He would presently find Himself beset by an importunate crowd, and His long journey would be in vain. She followed after Him urging her entreaty, but still He paid no heed. It was an embarrassing situation, and the Twelve, resenting the annoyance, suggested that He should grant her petition and so be rid of her. He answered with unwonted severity: "I was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." That was the commission which He had lately given them when He sent them forth to preach in southern Galilee, and now as then the limitation was but temporary. He was the Saviour of the world, but the task of winning the world was reserved for them, and He had not come to Phœnicia to proclaim His salvation there but to prepare them for their high vocation. This meanwhile was His concern, and He was loath to be diverted from it.

They held on their way till they reached their lodging, and the woman pressed in after them<sup>1</sup> and knelt down before Him. "Lord," she implored, "help me!" Then at last He took notice of her. "It is not allowable," said He, "to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." This seems at the first blush a heartless insult, breathing the very spirit of Jewish intolerance. For in their bitter contempt of the Gentiles the Jews reviled them as "dogs" — "uncircumcised dogs," "dogs outside the Holy City," those unclean pariahs which prowled the streets by night in quest of garbage, howling and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mk. vii. 25, where the true reading is "*entered* and fell at His feet."

snarling. On the lips of a Rabbi this would have been the meaning of the phrase, but it was not its meaning on our Lord's lips. He was quoting a familiar proverb suggested by His surroundings. The word He uses is a kindly diminutive, the proper designation of the little house-dogs which attended at meal-times begging for scraps. It was only scraps that they got, and there was a homely proverb: "First the children, then the doggies." The table was spread for the evening meal when the Lord and His disciples entered their lodging, and the family pet was there expectant. This suggested His reply to the poor suppliant: "It is not allowable to take the children's bread and cast it to the doggies." It was humorously and kindly spoken. Her sorrow had touched His heart and her importunity was conquering His reluctance; and, reading His compassion in His look and tone, she capped His proverb with another in the same strain—a thrifty proverb forbidding waste. "Yes, Lord," she said, "even the doggies beneath the table eat of the children's scraps." It was a clever retort, and it won its reward. "My woman," said He, "great is your faith! Have it as you wish." She went home and found her daughter well.

What happened thereafter is barely outlined by St. Mark in a brief yet significant sentence: "And again He quitted the bounds of Tyre and Mk. vii. 31. went through Sidon." Evidently it happened as He had anticipated. He had come to Phœnicia that for a season He might sojourn there unknown and hold converse with the Twelve on the things of His Kingdom; but His healing of that poor girl brought around Him an eager throng, and His purpose was

once more frustrated. He recognised here the working of His Father's will which was His constant guide, and He obeyed its dictate. He did not turn away in quest of another retreat but, following the path so unexpectedly opened before Him, devoted Himself for a while to an active ministry in that strange environment. It may seem surprising that a Jewish teacher should have been able to discourse intelligibly to an alien people, but in truth there is no marvel here. For ever since the days of Alexander the Great, Greek had been the common language of the countries surrounding the Mediterranean, and thus He could preach as freely in Tyre and Sidon as in Capernaum or Jerusalem.

It was a truly momentous occasion—the only occasion when our Lord preached beyond the confines of the Holy Land, attesting the universality of His grace. And here doubtless lies the reason why it is so scantily recorded. Prejudice dies slowly, and even as the Jewish Christians in after days disliked St. Paul's Gentile apostleship, so they loved not to remember how the Lord had visited those heathen, and left the story untold. It is a grave omission. Had the story been written, it would have been not the least precious or least moving chapter of the Gospel narrative. For there is express evidence that His Phœnician ministry was singularly fruitful. By and by, in His farewell journey to Jerusalem, when He was setting out on His last journey to Jerusalem, He upbraided her cities, so peculiarly favoured, and contrasted their obduracy with the reception accorded Him in Tyre and Sidon.

Is there no memorial, no lingering echo of that unique ministry? On the pages of the early Christian

Mt. xi. 20-22; Lk. x. 12-15.

literature and in other often surprising quarters occur "unwritten sayings" of our Lord—sayings which no sacred writer recorded but which lived on in devout remembrance; and here is one of these: "The world is merely a bridge: you are to pass over it and not to build your dwellings upon it."<sup>1</sup> If this be indeed, as it surely is, an authentic saying of our Lord, then it was not spoken in the Holy Land; for it is remarkable that there were no bridges there. The Jordan was the only river, and it was crossed by fords like that at Bethabara, and the lesser streams when in flood were crossed on stilts. The saying was not spoken in the Holy Land; and since our Lord taught nowhere else beyond its borders, He must have spoken it in Phœnicia, probably at Tyre, that city of ancient renown, "the crowning city," as the prophet styles her, "whose merchants were princes, whose traffickers were the honourable of the earth." She was set on an island three quarters of a mile off the mainland and connected therewith in our Lord's day by a famous mole built by Alexander the Great. As our Lord passed over that famous bridge, traversed continually by caravans bringing to the harbour the silks and spices of the gorgeous East and carrying thence the rich cargoes from the western seaports—Ephesus, Corinth, and Tarshish, He saw there a parable; and discoursing in the market-place to those eager traffickers so busy with their perishing merchandise and oblivious of Eternity, "The world," said He, "is merely a bridge: you are to pass over it and not to build your dwellings upon it."

From Tyre He travelled northward, and He would

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my *Unwritten Sayings of Our Lord*, pp. 69 ff.

preach as He went. On his route lay Sarepta, the ancient Zarephath, where of old the prophet Elijah had succoured and blessed the poor widow ; and surely He would linger there. His goal was Tyre's commercial rival, the great seaport of Sidon, and there He closed His Phœnician ministry.



## WANDERINGS IN DECAPOIIS

Mt. xv. 29-xvi. 12 ; Mk. vii. 31b-viii. 26.

ON the completion of His Phœnician ministry He addressed Himself anew to His frustrated purpose and sought another retreat where He might resume His interrupted converse with the Twelve. There was now no privacy for Him in Phœnicia, since the land was ringing with His fame ; and it is written that on leaving Sidon " He went toward the Sea of Galilee across the Region of Decapolis " (*Decapolitana Regio*). This was not a geographical area. It was a wide stretch of territory reaching from Damascus in the north as far south as Philadelphia (*Rabbath-Ammon*), and extending eastward to Kanatha near the border of the Arabian desert, and comprehending the districts of Ituræa, Trachonitis, Gaulanitis, Batanæa, Auranitis, and Gilead. In the course of Alexander the Great's conquest it had been occupied by Greek settlers, and for the security of their commerce, chiefly against Bedawin incursions, their cities had formed a defensive league. Others joined later, but originally, as the name Decapolis implies, there were ten cities in the confederacy—Damascus and Hippos in the north, Gadara, Raphana (precise site now unknown), and Kanatha in the east, Scythopolis (the only confederate city west of the Jordan), Pella, Dion, Gerasa, and Philadelphia in the south.

From Sidon our Lord journeyed south-eastward till

He crossed the Phœnician frontier and passed into Gaulanitis, where He held southward and travelled through the uplands eastward of the Lake of Galilee. It seemed likely that in a country mainly peopled by native Syrians and Greek settlers He would go unrecognised; but He was escorted from Phœnicia by enthusiastic followers, and their plaudits published the fame of the gracious Healer. The crowd increased as He went, and though He would fain have escaped, His compassion once more conquered His reserve. Somewhere to the east of the Lake a peculiarly pitiful case was presented to Him—a poor creature afflicted with deafness and a stammer in his speech, and evidently weak also in understanding, since Cf. Mk. ii. 3, x. 13. it is written that he was “brought” or rather “borne” to Him like a paralytic or an infant. The sight of him and the entreaties of his friends touched the Lord’s heart and He addressed Himself to his cure. Trust in the Healer was always the Cf. Mt. xiii. condition of healing, and He set Himself first <sup>58</sup> of all to win the poor soul’s confidence. Apparently he was frightened and excited by the throng of strangers, and the Lord took him and his friends apart from the crowd and soothed his alarm. Kind words he could not hear, but he could feel the touch of a kind hand; and as one caresses a timid animal, so the Lord fingered his deaf ears and, to awaken within him the hope of healing, dealt with him after the manner of an ancient physician. It was universally believed in those days that there was medicinal efficacy in saliva, and He moistened His finger and smeared the stammering tongue. Thus the poor creature conceived that both his infirmities were being treated, and the

kindness of the Lord's face inspired him with confidence. All this was merely preliminary. God alone could work the miracle, and the Lord looked up to Heaven with a sigh. Only a sigh, but the sigh was a sympathetic prayer. *Epphatha*, He said in the Aramaic vernacular which a Jew instinctively employed in moments of tender emotion—*epphatha*, "be opened"; and immediately the deaf ears heard and the babbling lips spoke distinctly.

He enjoined silence regarding the miracle and stole away to the hillside and seated Himself there with the Twelve in the hope that the crowd would disperse. But His injunction was disregarded. The tidings spread, and for the next three days the people flocked to Him from near and far with their sick—blind, deaf, crippled, and every sort, and laid them at His feet; and He healed them all. Betwixt the sick folk and their friends and the curious spectators there was an assemblage of over four thousand. Had they been Jews, they would have acclaimed Him the Messiah; but they were Gentiles, and it is written that "they glorified the God of Israel," recognising by the wonders of His grace that He was greater than their heathen deities.

It was a lonesome spot among the wild uplands, and some of them had come a long distance. They had come scantily provided, and they were now in sore need. "I have compassion for the crowd," said our Lord to the Twelve. "They have been three days in attendance upon Me, and they have nothing to eat. I do not wish to send them away fasting lest they faint on the road." Remembering what had happened on the plain of Bethsaida, they understood

what was in His mind. "Where," they answered, confessing their impotence and leaving all to Him, "can we get loaves enough in a wilderness to satisfy so large a crowd?" All the provision they had with them was seven loaves and some dried fish. Bidding the folk recline on the hillside, He took these and blessed them and served them out, and again the scanty store grew in His hands, and again it amply sufficed. There was enough and to spare. Even as after the feeding of the five thousand the remaining fragments filled twelve baskets, so now they filled, not seven "baskets," but—as the Evangelists are careful to observe, though our English Version ignores the significant distinction—seven "maunds." Nowhere else does the word occur in the New Testament save in the story of the escape of Saul of Tarsus from Damascus after his conversion, when he Ac. ix. 25. was lowered in "a maund," a wicker hamper, over the city-wall. A maund was generally larger than a basket, but it is not the size of the maunds that is in question here. The point is rather that it was the Twelve who collected the fragments after the feeding of the five thousand, and the twelve baskets which they filled were, as we have seen, the bread-baskets which they carried after the fashion of Jewish travellers; but here it was the people who collected the fragments, doubtless for the supply of such as had come far and required provision for their homeward journey. They were a crowd of Gentiles and had no baskets; and probably those wicker maunds in which the fragments were collected for distribution as need demanded were hastily woven on the spot.

The wonderment which so striking a miracle occasioned dispelled the Lord's hope of finding privacy in that neighbourhood, and He recognised the necessity of betaking Himself elsewhere. But how was He to escape from the people who were thronging about Him and would follow Him wherever He might go, publishing His fame? It was an embarrassing situation, and the perplexity which He and the Twelve now experienced is reflected in the obscurity of the narrative at this stage. It is written that "He sent the multitude away and got on board *the* boat with His disciples." What boat? They had not there on the eastern side of the Lake as at Capernaum one of their own always in readiness; and it seems that He despatched some of His disciples from the inland to the shore to procure a boat, and then, stealing away from the multitude, He hastily embarked and set sail with the Twelve. And whither did they direct their course? St. Matthew says that "He came Mt. xv. 39  
R.V. into the bounds of Magadan" and St. Mark that "He came into the parts of Dalmanutha." Both these localities are now unknown, and they would be little known even then, since He was seeking an unfrequented spot. There is a place on the Jordan some four miles inland from the southern end of the Lake and about a mile north of the confluence of the tributary Yarmûk (Hieromax) called *Ed Delhemîyeh*; and it may well be that this is the ancient Dalmanutha, while Magadan was the name of the district. Thus, putting off from the eastern shore, they sailed to the southern end of the Lake, and there beached the boat and travelled inland.

In that quiet neighbourhood they would find the

seclusion which He desired ; but their retreat was soon invaded. Dalmanutha was in the territory of Herod Antipas, and news of His arrival reached the ears of the Pharisees at Capernaum and the Sadducees at Herod's capital of Tiberias, where, as we have seen, they went by the name of the Herodians ; and presently a company of these His inveterate enemies appeared on the scene and would have opened a controversy. Professing perplexity, they requested that He would " display to them a sign from Heaven," some striking miracle which would irrefragably attest His Messianic claims. It was the third occasion on which they had presented this challenge, and it is instructive to observe how He received it on each successive occasion. The first was at the beginning of His ministry after His expulsion of the Jo. ii. 18, traffickers from the Temple-court. This was 19.

a bold assertion of His Messiahship, and the rulers in all sincerity required an attestation of His claim. He granted them then a sign, though another sort of sign than they expected—a prophecy of His Death and Resurrection, that consummation which, in St. Paul's phrase, would " define Him ' Son of Rom. i. 4. God ' in power." The second occasion was

at the beginning of the second year of His ministry, when a like challenge was presented by the Mt. xii. Pharisees at Capernaum. It was no longer 38-42; Lk. xi. 16, an honest appeal for evidence, since the rulers 29-32.

were now His avowed and malignant adversaries ; and He met it with a stern rebuke : " It is an evil and adulterous generation that seeks after a sign ; and no sign will be given it but the sign of Jonah." The prophet's message was the only sign granted to the



Ninevites of old, and it had sufficed to win them to repentance; and His message, more appealing than Jonah's, was the only sign which the Lord would grant His generation. And now on this the third occasion His answer is a curt and contemptuous refusal. Their obduracy grieved Him and He drew a deep sigh. "Why," He exclaimed, "is this generation seeking after a sign? Verily I tell you, no sign shall be given this generation."<sup>1</sup>

It were vain to tarry longer at Dalmanutha. Only in the far north could He hope for privacy, and thither He would now betake Himself. Apprehensive of further molestation He hurried the Twelve down to the shore of the Lake where they had left their boat, and such was their haste that they forgot ere embarking to procure provisions. Setting sail, they steered for the upper end of the Lake. It was a long run of some thirteen miles, and as the boat glided on her way, He conversed with them. It is no wonder that His thoughts were occupied with the rencontre at Dalmanutha; for it was indeed a painful incident. His assailants were Pharisees and Herodians, representatives of the two parties which both politically and religiously were sundered by a wide gulf of mutual antagonism; yet they were banded against Him. It was an unholy alliance, revealing what diverse forces were leagued against His Kingdom—the passions of blind bigotry and worldly ambition. "See!" said He to the Twelve, "beware of the leaven of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mk. viii. 12. Mt.'s report is doubly confused: (1) by the introduction into the Received Text of a saying spoken in another connection (Mt. xvi. 2b, 3; cf. Lk. xii. 54-56) and absent here in the best authorities; (2) by assimilation to His answer on the previous occasion (cf. Mt. xii. 39; Lk. xi. 29).

Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." It was a warning against the subtle working of those evil passions in their own souls, and they should have understood it; for the metaphor was familiar: was it not a proverb in those days that "a little leaven Cf. Gal. v. 9; 1 Cor. v. 6. leavens the whole mass"? But their minds were occupied with a practical concern; and catching the word "leaven," they fancied that He was upbraiding them for putting off without bread. Their dulness vexed Him. Surely they had profited little by all that they had heard and seen when so trivial a matter troubled them. "Do you not yet understand?" He remonstrated. "Do you not remember the five loaves of the five thousand and the twelve baskets? and the seven loaves of the four thousand and the seven maunds? How do you not understand that it was not about loaves that I spoke?"

They reached the head of the Lake and disembarking took their way northward. Fully a mile inland lay the town of Bethsaida, formerly a poor village but recently adorned by the Tetrarch Philip and, though still but a village for size, raised to the dignity of a city and styled Bethsaida Julias in honour of the Emperor Augustus' daughter Julia. They would have avoided it but that they must replenish their empty baskets; and as they passed through it, He was recognised and a blind man was brought to Him for healing. Foreseeing the embarrassment which would arise if He healed him publicly, He grasped his hand and conducted him out of the village; and when He was clear of it and remote from observation, He addressed Himself to his cure, seeking first, as in the case of the deaf stammerer, to win his trust by playing

the part of a physician. He moistened the sightless eyes with saliva, and then, holding him in His kindly grasp, asked him if he made out anything. The man had got his sight, but he was naturally bewildered by this his first perception of external things. In his blindness he had formed notions of these, like that other blind man the philosopher tells of who, being asked his notion of scarlet, answered that he conceived it as like the loud blare of a trumpet, construing colour whereof he had no perception in terms of his faculty of hearing. Even so had this blind man his subjective notions of external appearances, and the reality surprised him. "I make out the men," said he; "for I see them as trees walking about." They did not correspond with his notion of men. They were liker his idea of trees, but he recognised them for men because they were walking about. The Lord passed His hands over his eyes and completed the cure: the man saw everything clearly and recognised what he saw.

Had the miracle been published in the village, a crowd would quickly have gathered and pursued Him, but He averted this embarrassment. The man dwelt in the country outside Bethsaida, and He bade him and his friends go straight home.

## A RETREAT TO CÆSAREA PHILIPPI

Mt. xvi. 13-xvii. 21 ; Mk. viii. 27-ix. 29 ; Lk. ix. 18-43a.

WHAT destination had our Lord in view? By the sources of the Jordan at the base of the southern slope of Mount Hermon which some fifteen miles northward reared its snow-clad crest nigh eight thousand feet aloft, lay a town which the Greek invaders had called Paneas in honour of Pan, their god of woodlands and pastures, and which the Tetrarch Philip had recently adorned and named Cæsarea in honour of the Emperor Cæsar Augustus and in his own honour Cæsarea Philippi or Philip's Cæsarea, to distinguish it from the seaport of Cæsarea, the Roman capital of Judæa. Probably He had passed that way in the course of His journey from Sidon and had marked it as a pleasant retreat ; and now He betakes Himself thither.

There at last on that peaceful mountainside He found the privacy which He had sought so long, and addressed Himself to converse with the Twelve regarding His Kingdom and the high service to which He had called them as its heralds to the world. First, in view of all the prevalent misunderstanding of His character and work and the recent defection of so many who had professed themselves His disciples, He would expressly ascertain how the Twelve regarded Him. As He walked abroad with them, He put the question : " Who do men say that the Son of Man is ? " They told Him the various opinions. The

latest was that of Herod Antipas—that He was John the Baptist risen from the dead. Another was that He was Elijah returned, according to Jewish expectation, to prepare the way for the Messiah's advent. To many this seemed incredible, since in His graciousness He was so unlike the stern prophet of old ; and their idea was that He was one of the later prophets risen from the dead, most likely Jeremiah, the gentlest of them all. Such were the prevailing opinions. " But you," said He, " who do you say that I am ? " Prompt and unhesitating came the answer : " You are the Christ "—the Messiah, the Promised Saviour.

It was Simon Peter who spoke—that generous, impulsive disciple, so prone to err yet so quick to repent and ever the lover of the Master ; and it was indeed a great confession, proving as it did that, though hidden from the world, His glory had been revealed by heavenly grace to Simon and the rest for whom he spoke. It was truly a revelation and no discovery of their own. " Blessed are you, Simon, son of John," He exclaimed, playing upon the name which signified " the Lord's grace " : " blessed are you, child of heavenly grace ! For it was not flesh and blood that revealed it to you ; no, it was My Father in Heaven." It was a glad congratulation. At His first meeting cf. Jo. i. 42. with Simon, observing the impulsiveness of his character, He had after the Jewish fashion given him the title Peter, " Rock," expressing the character which he must by grace attain ; and this confession, evincing his strong and steadfast faith in face of all that seemed to contradict it, proved that he had now attained it. " I tell you that you are Peter (the Rock), and upon this rock I will build

My Church and 'the gates of Hades' will not prevail against her. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind upon earth will stand bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose upon earth will stand loosed in Heaven."

Cf. Is.  
xxxviii.  
10.

What does this mean? Surely it is the supreme tragedy of Christian history that a saying of Him who was done to death by the priestcraft of His day has been claimed as its divine charter by that more baleful priestcraft which, born of mediæval superstition, has so monstrously corrupted His Evangel and so cruelly enslaved the souls and intellects of men. What does it mean? The ancient Church, as represented by the great Greek and Latin Fathers, was divided between two interpretations:

(1) The earliest is that of the brilliant Alexandrian scholar Origen. The rock on which the Lord would build His Church was indeed Peter, but not Peter simply: it was Peter and every disciple sharing Peter's faith. It was Peter as a confessor, and every confessor is a Peter. "You," says our Lord, "are Peter, the exemplar of stedfast faith; and on this stedfast faith I will build My Church." So, according to St. Chrysostom, the rock was "the faith of his confession," and, according to St. Cyril, "the unwavering faith of the disciple." And herewith St. Cyprian agrees.

(2) That was the early view of St. Augustine, but subsequently he preferred another—that the rock was not Peter at all but Christ Himself. This was St. Jerome's view. Christ is the Rock, and He called Simon a rock in virtue of his faith, just as, being Himself "the Light of the world," He so designated His disciples who reflect Him.

Cf. 1 Cor.  
x. 4.  
Jo. viii.  
12; Mt. v.  
14.



These are the lines of interpretation followed by the ancient Church ; and be it observed that they are equally exclusive of the mediæval fancy, inspired by the fiction of ecclesiastical infallibility, that our Lord here delegates His authority to Peter and his papal successors. It was the emergence in his day of a kindred disposition on the part of some presbyters and bishops who, "not understanding this passage, assumed somewhat of the arrogance of the Pharisees," that inclined St. Jerome to the interpretation which he and St. Augustine support against the consensus of patristic opinion ; and indeed it expresses an essential truth—that "the Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord." It should, however, be observed that it is not *the foundation* that our Lord here speaks of. "Upon this rock," He says, "I will"—not "found" but—"build My Church"; and His

meaning is defined by the noble apostolic conception of the Church as a spiritual Sanctuary of living stones. He is the one and only foundation, and each true believer

is a stone laid on Him, "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets." The Prophets are here the Christian Prophets who ranked in the primitive Church next in prestige to the Apostles ; and their foundation means neither the

foundation which they laid, since it was God that laid it, nor the foundation which they constitute, but the one and only foundation

whereon they all, including Peter, were built by faith. This is the abiding distinction of Simon Peter, that as the first confessor he was the first stone laid upon that foundation ; but his honour is shared by each fresh

Cf. 1 Pet.

ii. 4, 5.

Cf. 1 Cor.

iii. 11.

Eph. ii. 20.

Cf. 1 Cor.

xii. 28 ;

Eph. iv.

11.

Cf. Is.

xxviii. 16 ;

Rom. ix.

33.

believer who takes up his confession and is built with him into the ever growing fabric.

But what of that further promise: "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind upon earth will stand bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose upon earth will stand loosed in Heaven"? Observe that our Lord's language here is not ecclesiastical terminology but familiar, homely imagery. To give a person "the keys" was a Jewish phrase for putting him, like King Hezekiah's grand vizier Eliakim, in charge of the house. Is. xxii. 22.

Because he had the keys, when he locked the doors no one else could open them, and when he opened them no one else could lock them. And similarly "loose" and "bind" were common Rabbinical phrases, signifying "permit" and "prohibit."

What then does our Lord mean when, after telling Peter that as His first confessor he was the first stone in the fabric of His Church, that spiritual Sanctuary whereof He was Himself the foundation and whose stones are believing men, He now adds this promise of authority in the Kingdom of Heaven? Here is an illuminating fact. At Cæsarea the promise was addressed to Peter alone, but our Lord reiterated it on two subsequent occasions, and on each it was addressed not to Peter alone but to others as well. The first of these occasions was a few weeks later. The Master and the Twelve had returned to Capernaum Mt. xviii. and, sitting with them in Peter's house, He 18. was discoursing to them regarding true greatness in His Kingdom. "Verily," said He, "I tell you"—no longer Peter alone but them all—"all that you bind upon earth will stand bound in Heaven, and all that you

loose upon earth will stand loosed in Heaven." What had made the difference? Simply this—that at the moment of his confession at Cæsarea Peter was the only confessor, the only stone as yet laid on the One Foundation; but presently the others joined in his confession, and then they took their places beside Peter in the spiritual fabric and shared equally in his dignity. Nor was the promise limited to the Apostles. It was re-

Jo. xx. 19-23. peated, the selfsame promise though differently worded, on a third occasion—the

evening of the Resurrection Day when the Lord appeared in the upper room at Jerusalem to the assembled disciples, not the Apostles alone

Cf. xxiv. 9, 10, 33. but, as St. Luke states, the Apostles and

"those that were with them," "all the rest," including the women. "Peace be to you," He said; "even as the Father has commissioned Me, I also send you." Then He breathed upon them: "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted to them; and whosoever you retain, they are retained."

Here then is the decisive truth. That promise, made first to Peter at Cæsarea in the moment of his great confession, was a promise to every confessor; and as the other Apostles joined in their comrade's confession they too inherited the promise. And not the Apostles alone but every believer in every generation to the end of time who shares the faith of the Apostles and is built, a living stone, on the one foundation whereon they were built—the one foundation which is Jesus Christ.

Thus the promise belongs neither to Peter alone and his supposed successors nor to any priestly order, but to the Church, "the community of the faithful" (*coetus fidelium*). It is the Church, as her Risen Lord's

witness and representative, that holds the keys of His Kingdom, speaking with His authority and declaring His will. This idea, however, is widely different from the mediæval fiction of ecclesiastical infallibility. And the difference lies in the condition which the Lord attached to the promise. Observe what is written. First of all "He breathed upon them, and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'"; and then He said: "Whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted to them; and whosoever you retain, they are retained." And the thought is expressed by the grand Pauline Cf. Eph. i. conception of the Church as the Body of Christ, 22, 23. His perpetual Incarnation. He is the Head, and the Church is His body and each believer a particular member; and even as the physical body is the organ of the brain, so is the Church His organ, and He speaks and works through her, so long but only so long and so far as she remains in vital union with Him.

The value of Peter's confession lay in this—that, since it was so difficult for Jews to accept the lowly Son of Man as the King of Israel, their assurance of His Messiahship proved that the Twelve had perceived beneath His lowliness the glory of His heavenly grace. And therefore He hailed the confession with exultant gladness. At the same time He recognised the peril which their faith involved and the mischief which would ensue if they proclaimed it, since it would encourage the popular expectation of a national *bouleversement*. And therefore He immediately charged them to "tell no one that He was the Christ." Moreover, the Twelve themselves still clung to the Jewish ideal of the Messiah and His Kingdom; and their notion was that their Master's lowliness was merely a temporary disguise,

and He would presently cast it aside and manifest His rightful majesty and claim the throne of His father David. There was no lesson which they had more need to learn than the truth regarding His Messiahship ; and so, pursuing the purpose which had brought Him with them to that peaceful retreat at Cæsarea, He now seeks to disabuse their minds of their secular ideal and show them what actually awaited Him—not a throne at Jerusalem but a cruel death. He would be arraigned before the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court of seventy-one Elders representing the rival parties of the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and including, as the leaders of the former, the Chief Priests—the acting Chief Priest, who was *ex officio* President, and the Chief Priests *emeriti*—and, as the leaders of the latter, the Scribes, the guardians and interpreters of the Sacred Law. Already it had been determined to arraign Him on the capital charge of blasphemy, and His condemnation was inevitable. “The Son of Man,” said He, “must suffer much, and be rejected by the Elders and Chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and,” He added, foretelling also the final triumph, “after three days rise again.”

It was a startling announcement. Already indeed ominous suggestions had fallen from His lips in His public reasonings ; but nothing like this, so deliberate and definite, a distinct intimation to the Twelve in direct, personal converse. It was an express confirmation of those vague hints which, incredible as they had seemed, must have rankled in their minds ; and they were horrified, especially Peter, who loved the Master so well. He clutched Him and cried : “Mercy on you,

Jo. ii. 19,  
iii. 14. Mt.  
ix. 14, 15 ;  
Mk. ii. 18-  
20 ; Lk. v.  
33-35.  
Jo. vi. 51,  
55.

Lord ! this will never happen to you." It was kindly meant, yet had he understood he would surely have held his peace. The prospect of His Passion was terrible to the Master. His frail humanity shuddered at it, prompting Him to turn aside from the painful path ; and it was only His devotion to His Father's will that nerved Him to pursue it. His breast was torn by a continual conflict betwixt the appeal of Self and the call of God ; and in that impassioned remonstrance He recognised the solicitation of Satan, the Adversary, disguised in the accents of human affection. He turned sharply and exclaimed : " Get behind Me, Satan ! You are a stumbling-block to Me ; for you are not taking God's side but men's."

And then He told the Twelve that His painful path was the path which they too must tread. They were dreaming of an earthly kingdom and places of honour beside His throne ; and He displays the dread reality. They were called to a stern warfare, and like a general on the eve of battle He addresses to them an appeal which would stir their souls like a trumpet. He was going before them to the conflict, and would they not follow Him in loyal devotion ? In saving his life the recreant loses it ; for inglorious life is worse than death, and a glorious death is immortality. And if they shirked the ordeal, how would they meet Him and endure His scorn when He came in the glory of His Father with the holy angels ? It was indeed a stern conflict that lay before them, but their cause would surely prevail. The immediate prospect was dark, but His death was not the end. " After three days He would rise again," and some of them would live to witness the inauguration of His Kingdom's triumph.



With such converse regarding His Death and the glory which should follow, the Lord occupied His sojourn at Cæsarea, seeking to forewarn the Twelve of the approaching *dénouement*. It was difficult for them to take it in ; for the idea of His Death was so contrary to their Messianic expectation and that of His Resurrection so remote from their experience. At the time, as the sequel proves, His instruction was largely beyond their grasp, and it was only in the light of the event that they understood it ; nevertheless He would spare no pains to prepare them for the impending ordeal, and He vouchsafed to Peter, James, and John, His trusted three, a singular prevision of the glory which should afterwards be revealed. They had been a week at Cæsarea and, leaving the others behind, He conducted the three " to a high mountain "—assuredly not, according to an ancient fancy, Mount Olivet nor yet, according to ecclesiastical tradition, Mount Tabor nearly fifty miles distant from Cæsarea, but a neighbouring height of Mount Hermon.

The night had fallen when they reached the summit, and the three disciples, wrapping their mantles about them, lay down and slept ; but the Master had come thither to commune with His Father, and while they slept, He prayed. Presently they awoke, and a radiant vision met their astonished gaze. They beheld their Master " appavelled in celestial light," and two heavenly visitants communing with Him. They heard the high discourse and learned thence who the strangers were. They were Moses and Elijah. And what was their theme ? They were speaking, not of " the decease," as our English Version weakly has it, but, as it is in

Greek, "the Exodus which He was soon to accomplish at Jerusalem."

What did the marvel mean? Like the miracle which they had witnessed that night on the Lake when the Lord came to them over the rough waters, it was an anticipation of that crowning miracle whereof He had been vainly seeking to apprise them—His Resurrection from the dead, the transformation of His mortal body, "the body of His humiliation," into Phil. iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 40, 44, "a spiritual, a heavenly body," emancipated 50. from earthly limitations and fitted for that

Kingdom which "flesh and blood cannot inherit." They understood this afterwards when He was raised from the dead and manifested Himself to them "alive after His Passion"; but meanwhile they did not, they could not understand it. They could only gaze in wonderment until the vision faded and the two heavenly visitants were passing from their view; and then the impulsive Peter spoke, discovering how little he and his comrades comprehended the revelation. "Lord," he cried, "it is good that we should be here! If you please, I will make here three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." It may have been a foolish speech, but it was love that prompted it. The thought that the dear Master must die a cruel death was terrible to him; and here, he fancied, was a way of escape. Why quit the hallowed mount and resume the bitter conflict? The words were still on his lips when a radiant cloud overshadowed them, and the Divine Voice which had spoken at the Jordan proclaiming His Messiahship, spoke again: "This is My Son, My Beloved: hearken to Him." Awestricken, they fell on their faces and lay prostrate until He touched

them and bade them rise ; and when they looked about them, He was there alone.

What was the purpose of the Transfiguration ? It served, in the first place, as an encouragement to our Lord in view of the difficulties which encompassed Him and the ordeal which was looming so grimly before Him. His converse with those two glorified saints of old whose names were the greatest in Israel's history showed Him that, though misunderstood and hated on earth, He had Heaven's sympathy and approbation. It was like a vision of home to the weary traveller, and it nerved Him to tread the sorrowful way to the end. And it had a message also for the three disciples. His announcement of His approaching Passion had horrified them ; but how did Moses and Elijah view that dread consummation ? In their eyes His death was no tragic disaster ; it was " the Exodus which He was soon to accomplish at Jerusalem "—a triumphant deliverance, grander than that ancient deliverance which Moses had achieved when he led Israel forth from the land of bondage.

On the morrow they returned to Cæsarea, and as they made their way down the mountain, the Lord enjoined the three to keep silence meanwhile regarding what they had seen. Though they had themselves understood it, their story of the Transfiguration would have been misconstrued by their duller comrades and still more by the multitude, and would inevitably have confirmed them in their wild anticipations. And indeed its significance was hidden even from the three. Despite His express intimation of His approaching Passion they still clung to their expectation of a worldly triumph, and His premonition of His Resurrection had

merely bewildered them. Nothing but the actual event would dispel their illusion and reveal to them the significance of their experience on the Mount. And so He bade them say nothing of it "until the Son of Man arose from the dead." It proves the justice of His apprehension that His reference to His "rising again from the dead" puzzled them, and they "questioned among themselves what it meant."

So little did they realise its importance that instead of appealing to the Master they dismissed the question and turned to a petty problem arising out of their Jewish theology. Their vision of Elijah on the Mount had recalled to them the Rabbinical doctrine that the ancient prophet would appear on the eve of the Messiah's advent and prepare Israel to receive Him. Had he not appeared too late? "The Scribes say that Elijah must come first." Their question afforded the Lord an opportunity to reiterate and enforce His announcement of His death. "Yes," He answered, "and Elijah did come." John the Baptist had come and performed the office which the Rabbis assigned to the ancient prophet. "Elijah did come, and they did not recognise him but worked their will upon him." And as they had treated the Messiah's herald, so would they treat the Messiah. "How is it written of the Son of Man? He will come to suffer much and be set at naught."

As they approached the retreat where they had left the nine, they perceived that its privacy had been invaded. The Galileans had missed the Lord. They would expect to find Him at Jerusalem during the Passover-week, which that year (28 A.D.) was the last week of March; but He was not there, and they would

return home wondering what had become of Him. The days passed until—if there be truth in the ecclesiastical tradition, both eastern and western, which celebrates the Transfiguration on August 6—four months had elapsed; and then, guided by rumours of His movements, they tracked Him to His retreat at Cæsarea. The rulers were as eager for His discovery as the people, and a party of Scribes, no doubt those inquisitors who had spied upon Him so long, accompanied the crowd. They found only the nine, who could not tell whither the Lord and their three comrades had betaken themselves. It was a grievous disappointment to them all, especially to one who had come thither with a burden of sorrow. His son, his only child, was sorely afflicted. He was a lunatic, deaf and dumb and epileptic; and the unhappy father had brought him that the Lord might heal him. He presented the poor creature to the nine in the hope that they would work the miracle. And they might have done it; for Cf. Mt. x. 1, 8; Mk. vi. 7; Lk. ix. 1. had not the Lord empowered them to “cast out demons”? They attempted it, but they failed; and they were standing impotent and abashed with the crowd about them and the Scribes taunting them.

Just then the Lord and His three companions approached; and on espying Him the crowd, it is written, “came to meet Him”—a significant Lk. ix. 37. phrase in the original, denoting the ovation accorded to a royal visitor. The people hastened to welcome Him; and they would have hailed Him exultantly, but when they got near Him, something hushed their clamour and “they were greatly amazed.” Surely it was the sight of His face still shining with

the glory of His transfiguration, like the face of Moses when he came down from the Mount and "they were afraid to come nigh him." He asked Ex. xxxiv. what was ado, and the afflicted father told his 29, 30. story—how he had brought his poor child to the disciples for healing, and they had failed. "O faithless generation!" He exclaimed, "how long shall I be with you? how long endure you? Bring him to Me."

Willing hands grasped the lad and carried him forward. Excited by his strange surroundings, the poor creature was seized with a violent fit and dropped struggling and foaming at the Lord's feet. "How long has he been afflicted thus?" He asked the agonised father. "Since childhood," was the answer; "and many a time it has cast him into fire and into water to destroy him. But," he implored, "have compassion on us and help us, if you can." "'If you can'!" echoed the Lord. "There is no 'cannot' where there is faith." "I have faith," he cried: "help where my faith is lacking." It is a blessed law of the moral order that there is a vicarious efficacy in love; and the father's faith availed for his imbecile son. The Lord had but to will it, and the power of God would have healed the lad; but foremost in the eager throng of spectators were the malicious Scribes, and a miracle thus quietly wrought they would have pronounced no miracle at all but a natural cessation of the fit. And therefore He acted on the common theory of demoniacal possession. "You dumb and deaf spirit," said He, "I charge you, come out of him and never more enter into him." A cry and a paroxysm, and the boy lay to all appearance dead,



till He grasped his hand and raised him, and presented him to his father healed.

The Lord retired with His disciples to their lodging in Cæsarea. The nine were sorely discomfited by their failure and His rebuke, and they talked it over among themselves. What the reason was they knew very

Cf. Mk. ix. 33, 34 ; well. During the Master's absence they had

Mt. xviii. 1 ; been disputing on a question that bulked

Lk. ix. 46. largely in their minds—which of them should

hold the chief place by His throne when He established His Kingdom. It was an ungracious employment.

It banished faith and love from their hearts, and what marvel that they could work no miracle?

They knew the reason of their impotence, but, loath to acknowledge it, they cast about for an excuse.

Perhaps, they suggested, it was a peculiarly difficult case: special power was required for the

expulsion of this sort of spirit. They appealed shamefastly to the Master: "Why could we not cast it out?"

"Because," He answered, "you had so little faith.

'This sort' goes out by nothing but by prayer."

## BACK IN GALILEE

Mt. xvii. 22-xviii. 9, 15-35 ; Mk. ix. 30-50 ; Lk. ix. 43<sup>b</sup>-50, xvii. 1-4.  
Lk. x. 1, 13-15 ; Mt. xi. 20-24. Lk. xii. 13-34 (xvi. 13) ; Mt. vi.  
19-34. Lk. xiii. 1-17.

Now that those Galileans had tracked Him thither, Cæsarea Philippi was no longer a peaceful retreat, and He took His way back to Capernaum. He still had much to say to the Twelve, especially in regard to His approaching Passion ; and, stealing away with them from Cæsarea, He discoursed as they journeyed on that solemn theme, reiterating the announcement which He had already made and adding to it the tragic circumstance of His betrayal : “ The Son of Man will soon be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and on the third day He will be raised.” He did not tell them that it was one of themselves that would betray Him ; but He knew. Already He had perceived what was in the heart of Judas, the Man of Kerioth ; and already nigh six months ago, in that bitter hour when so <sup>Jo. vi. 64,</sup> many of His followers had forsaken Him <sup>71.</sup> after His sacramental discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum, He had intimated that there was one of them who had sold himself to the Devil. If they remembered this, it would add tenfold horror to His present announcement ; and it is no marvel that they received it with pained silence, afraid to question Him.

They talked, however, among themselves. Each would protest his loyalty to the Master ; and presently in the course of the long journey of nearly thirty miles they fell to disputing of their rival merits and their several titles to honour in His Kingdom. He marked their suppressed excitement and guessed how they were employed ; but He said nothing at the moment. By and by they reached Capernaum, and hardly had they entered the town when Peter was accosted and detained. What was the occasion ? Every Jew had to make an annual contribution of half a shekel toward the maintenance of the Temple at Jerusalem. It fell due on the fifteenth of the month Adar (March) ; and since Jesus and the Twelve had quitted Capernaum ere that date, their contributions were still outstanding. The collectors had observed their arrival and, hesitating to challenge the revered Master, they beckoned Peter aside and asked him : " Does your Teacher pay the half-shekel ? " " Yes," he replied, and hurried home in no small perturbation, since the law was that delinquents were liable to distraint, and the expense of their long absence had exhausted the scanty resources of his Master and himself.

It amused Jesus when he appeared with consternation on his face. He had surmised what was afoot when the collectors intervened, and He needed no explanation. " What think you, Simon ? " said He, taking the first word. " The kings of the earth—from whom do they take tribute ? From their own sons or from other people's ? " " From other people's " answered Peter. " Then," said He, " their sons are exempt." He meant that since the Temple was His

Father's House, the earthly habitation of the King of Glory, He was not chargeable with its maintenance. He was its Lord, and it existed for His honour. But His claim would have been mis-<sup>Cf. Jo. ii. 16.</sup>understood. It would have been construed as impiety and, ever eschewing needless offence, He would pay the tax. "Go," said He, "to the sea and cast a hook, and the first fish that rises, up with it and open its mouth, and you will find a shekel. Take that, and give it to them for Me and yourself."

It was a piece of that playful humour which our Lord, so grave with others, indulged in His familiar intercourse with the Twelve. Stories abounded in those days of lucky finds in the maws of fishes. St. Augustine tells one of a poor man at Hippo who had lost his cloak and prayed for a new one. On his way home by the seaside he espied a large fish stranded in a shoal, and, capturing it, he took it to a fishmonger and not only got a price for it but, when it was opened, found a gold ring in its maw. Our Lord was thinking of such common tales. What difficulty was there? Peter was a fisherman, and there were fish in the Lake and a market for them. "Away and let down your line, and see if there be not a shekel in the mouth of the first fish you catch." It was a gentle sarcasm, nor was Peter so dull as to miss its meaning.

Peter would put out that night to the fishing, but it was still day, and until nightfall Jesus communed with the Twelve. The scene was Peter's house, which was the Lord's abode at Capernaum; and He began His discourse by inquiring what it was that they had been debating so hotly that morning on the road. They hung their heads, ashamed to tell Him that they

had been disputing which of them would be greatest in His Kingdom. Without more ado He taught them a much needed lesson. A child, surely Peter's, was in the room and, beckoning the little lad to His side and encircling him with His kind arm, "Verily I tell you," said He, "unless you turn and become as children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." There is no ambition in a child, no selfish striving, but only a clinging trustfulness and loving obedience; and what a human father finds in his children, the Heavenly Father requires in His. To trust our Father and simply do His will with loving hearts, seeking to please Him and leaving the future at His disposal—this is peace and the way to spiritual greatness.

On this theme the Master discoursed, and His rebuke went home to His disciples. Thinking to extenuate their offence and represent their ambition as rather zeal in His cause, John interposed and related an incident which had occurred, probably, to himself and James in their prosecution of the recent mission in southern Galilee. They had encountered a disciple who was healing sick folk in the Master's name, and they had prohibited him because he was not an Apostle and therefore, as they judged, was usurping the apostolic prerogative. "Do not prevent him," said Jesus; "for one who is not against us is for us."

It was a common proverb; and there was a companion proverb which our Lord quoted on another occasion: "He who is not with Me is against Me." Contradictory as they appear, these are but two sides of the truth and neither is complete without the other. The latter maxim had an interesting origin. Some six centuries before the

Cf. Mt. xii.  
30; Lk. xi.  
23.

time of our Lord it was enacted by the Athenian legislator Solon that a citizen who stood neutral during an insurrection, taking neither side, should be accounted a rebel and so treated when order was restored. "It seems," observes Plutarch, "that he would not have us be indifferent and unaffected with the fate of the public, when our own concerns are upon a safe bottom ; nor when we are in health, be insensible to the distempers and griefs of our country. He would have us espouse the better and juster cause, and hazard everything in defence of it, rather than wait in safety to see which side the victory will incline to." And the principle which holds thus in the civil domain holds equally in the moral and religious. Where a moral issue is involved, neutrality is an immoral attitude. One who witnesses a villainy without protesting against it and at all hazards crying shame upon it, thereby constitutes himself a party to it ; and it is simply a confession of pusillanimity and an aggravation of his guilt if he pleads afterwards that, though he held his peace, he disapproved it.

And what of the maxim which our Lord quotes here : " One who is not against us is for us " ? It is a pithy rebuke of partisanship in politics and sectarianism in religion ; and it is the complement of the other proverb and quite as needful for us to lay to heart. It would be well for the State, sweetening the communal life and facilitating the establishment of a better order, were it recognised that, however they may differ regarding the best way of attaining it, good men are all seeking one and the selfsame end—the welfare of their country and their people. And how well it would be for Religion ! There have



always been and always will be diverse opinions on ecclesiastical administration and doctrinal definition ; and no man is an heretic who loves the Lord and seeks His honour.

That unknown disciple was no Apostle, but he was doing the Master's work. His success was God's seal upon his ministry, and when John and James frowned upon him, they were condemning what God had approved. They were discouraging one who, less privileged than themselves, loved the Lord no less. And that was a grave offence. If it were a foul Lev. xix. 14. wrong to lay a stumbling-block before a blind man, surely it was more heinous still to put hindrances on the road to Heaven. " Better for you," says Jesus, employing a familiar proverb, " to be cast into the sea with a millstone round your neck." In the world's sight that unknown disciple Ps. cxix. 141. was a humble personage, " small and despised " ; but he had faith and love in his heart, and such are precious in the sight of God and His holy angels, those ministering spirits whom He Heb. i. 14 ; Ps. xci. 11. sends forth to attend the heirs of salvation, giving them charge over them to keep them in all their ways. " See," He cried, " that you do not despise one of these little ones ! For I tell you that their angels in Heaven continually look on the face of My Father in Heaven."

In thus reproving in the Twelve a spirit all too reminiscent of Pharisaic and priestly arrogance, our Cf. Mt. xvi. 18, 19. Lord in no wise depreciated the authority wherewith He had invested them at Cæsarea Philippi for the administration of the community of His believing people or, as He here again styles it,

His "Church." Observe the name. It is in Greek *ecclesia*; and this was originally a term of Greek polity, denoting the popular assembly at Athens, the body of representatives "called forth" from the multitude of the citizens to deliberate and determine in their name on questions of common concern. In the Hebrew Scriptures the congregation of Israel, the gathering of the people on high occasions, was designated by two terms—*edah*, "assemblage," and *qahal*, "convocation"; and these are accurately though indiscriminately represented in the Greek version of the Septuagint by *synagogé* and *ecclesia*. Thus the terms passed into the sacred vocabulary of later Judaism; and when the Scribes instituted their effective system of religious education, they found a name ready to hand for the "houses of instruction" which they established in every town and village. They called these "synagogues." By and by, when our Lord required a name for the holy community which He founded, He appropriated the other term *ecclesia*. It excellently served His purpose, at once proclaiming the kinship of Christianity with the historic faith and distinguishing it from the decadent order of contemporary Judaism. And surely the Scribes were ill advised when they chose "synagogue" rather than "ecclesia," since the latter is a richer term, signifying not a mere "assembly" but a community divinely "chosen and called."

And here the Lord shows His Apostles the manner of Christian discipline. "If your brother sin,  
go, reprove him between you and him alone. Dt. xix  
15.  
If he hearken to you, you have gained your brother;  
but if he do not hearken, take with yourself one or

two more, that 'at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established.' And if he refuse to hear them, tell the Ecclesia; and if he refuse to hear the Ecclesia, let him be to you as the heathen and the taxgatherer." Here, in the first place, He confirms the authority which at Cæsarea He had conferred upon His Apostles and all who after them should be ordained to rule the community of the faithful. And, in the second place, He reminds them of its limitation. It was not a personal authority: it belonged to them as representatives of the holy community, and no individual judgment was valid unless corroborated by conference and consent. Where one sits alone in judgment, his verdict may be warped by prejudice or passion; but where several take prayerful counsel, personal bias is eliminated and their common judgment accords with the will of God. "I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about any matter which they pray about, their doing of it will be the doing of My Father in Heaven. For where there are two or **three** assembled in My name, there am I in their midst."

Thus should we deal with one who has wronged us, in no wise retaliating but bearing patiently with him and exhausting every device to win him to a better mind. Surely, thought the disciples, there is a limit to forbearance; and Peter interposed with a question. "Lord," said he, "if one sins against me and after I have forgiven him he just repeats the wrong, how often am I to forgive him?" The Jewish rule was: "Forgive thrice, and there the duty ceases"; but Peter knew that the Lord would require more,

and he suggested a more generous limit—"As often as seven times?" "No," was the answer, "not seven but seventy-seven times." The reference here is to that ancient story of primæval savagery in the Book of Genesis—how Tubal-cain, the first worker with metals, learned the art of fashioning deadly weapons; and his father Lamech, a descendant of Cain, the first murderer, exulted in the advantage which his son's invention afforded him over his enemies. "If," he cried, "Cain, with no weapon in his hand, was avenged seven times, I shall now be avenged seventy-seven." Reverse that reckoning, says our Lord. Even as seventy-sevenfold was the measure of the savage heart's lust for vengeance, so let it be the measure of your generosity in forgiving. Forgive as largely as once you hated.

Cf. R.V.  
marg.

Gen. iv  
24.

Even that, however, was not enough, and He proceeded to better it. We must forgive those who wrong us as freely and fully as God has forgiven us. Forgiveness is the measure of forgivingness. He tells of a king who found his affairs seriously embarrassed and instituted an investigation. It emerged that the blame lay with one of his ministers who, like Joseph in the house of Potiphar, had been entrusted with absolute control and had appropriated no less than ten thousand talents—more than £2,000,000. It was an enormous, practically an impossible defalcation; and for this very reason it justly represents our measureless indebtedness to God. The king was indignant and, after the irresponsible manner of an oriental potentate, not only confiscated the rascal's property but doomed himself and his wife and children to be sold as slaves. The wretch prostrated himself

Gen.  
xxxix. 6.

and implored clemency. "Bear with me," he cried, "and I shall pay you everything." The king's heart was touched, and he not merely released him but remitted all his enormous liabilities—again an impossible procedure for a human creditor but all the truer a picture of God's dealings with His debtors.

Surely it should have been a lesson to the man, binding him not alone to grateful and devoted service of so generous a master but to a like generosity toward his fellows who, in far less degree, were indebted to himself. But what followed? Hardly had he left the court when he encountered another officer of the royal household who owed him the paltry debt of an hundred *denarii*—some £3, 10s. ; and he took him by the throat and demanded instant payment. "Bear with me, and I shall pay you," pleaded the man in the very words which he had himself used a little earlier ; but he would not listen and cast the poor soul into prison. The story was carried to the king, and he was shocked and indignant. He summoned the heartless villain before him and, revoking his pardon, sentenced him, after the inhuman fashion of the day, to be tortured on the rack till he disgorged his ill-gotten wealth.

The Lord had returned to Capernaum but not to stay. His ministry there was ended, and His thoughts were now turning to Jerusalem and the death appointed for Him there. Henceforth He would devote Himself to the Holy City and address to her rulers and people a last appeal. It was now late in the month of August, 28 A.D., and it was time that He should betake Himself to this the closing task of His earthly ministry ; and His purpose was to travel slowly southward,

preaching as He went. It would be His last progress through the land, and He desired that His appeals by the way should prevail. And what did He do? He chose seventy of His disciples and sent them two by two in advance to the various places along the route which He meant to visit, that they might prepare the people's hearts to receive His message.

Since their mission would occupy some time, He lingered a while after their departure; but He did not remain at Capernaum. His work there was done, and He would fain revisit the inland of Galilee where He had so often preached during those two eventful years. So He quitted the city, and on attaining the western uplands whither He had been wont to retire when He would be alone with God, He paused and, looking back, surveyed the scene which He was leaving for ever—the lovely Plain of Gennesaret, the blue Lake, and the soft hills beyond, and northward the towns of Chorazin and Bethsaida Julias. There He had lavished His love and grace, yet how meagre the response which He had won! how bitter the enmity of the rulers! how worthless the plaudits of the multitude, so enthusiastic over His miracles, so blind to His spiritual purposes! His heart overflowed, and a lamentation broke from His lips: “Alas for you, Chorazin! alas for you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they had long ago repented in sackcloth and ashes. I tell you it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment than Isa. xiv. 13, 15. for you. And you, Capernaum—will you be ‘exalted to Heaven’? You will be ‘brought down to Hades.’ For if the mighty works which were done



in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. I tell you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom at the Day of Judgment than for you."

He went His way, and presently we find Him discoursing in some village. Hardly had He ceased when a voice from the crowd greeted Him. It was no response to His message nor yet a sufferer's cry for help. It was a request for His intervention in a graceless dispute. Two brothers had quarrelled over their dead father's property, and one of them, rightly or wrongly thinking himself aggrieved, appealed to the Master. "Teacher," said he, "bid my brother apportion the inheritance with me."

It was a sordid business, and the request jarred upon Jesus, engaged as He was with higher concerns. "Man," He replied, "who appointed Me judge or apportioner over you?" and turning to the crowd, He addressed a warning to them. "See," He cried, "and guard yourselves from every sort of grasping greed; for it is not so that when one has enough and to spare, his life is derived from his possessions." Then He enforced the lesson by a parable. He told them of a farmer who tilled his land so well that he found his barns too small for his overflowing harvest. "What shall I do?" said he, and thought it over. "This I shall do" was his resolution: "I shall pull down my barns and build bigger." Then he pictured the golden future. A few more teeming harvests, and he would be a rich man with all that heart could wish. "I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods in store for many years: take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry.'" That speech betrayed him. No

wickedness is laid to his charge. His wealth was honourably won by honest industry and shrewd enterprise, not by sweating his workers or cornering wheat ; nevertheless he had made a ruinous blunder. Cf. Pro. Engrossed in his crops, his cattle, and his xi. 26. marketing, he had bestowed never a thought upon those higher and infinitely more momentous concerns—death, judgment, eternity. He had left these out of his reckoning and neglected his spiritual nature till now it was atrophied and he could conceive nothing better for his immortal soul than “ eating and drinking and making merry.” In the very moment of his secure complacency he had a rude awakening. He had filled the cup of his pleasures, and just as he was raising it to his lips, it was dashed from his hand. “ God said to him, ‘ Fool ! this night your soul is required of you. And the things which you have provided—who will have them ? ’ ” This was the outcome of his striving and planning and hoarding—a lost soul and a disputed inheritance !

Afterwards, according to His wont when He was alone with the Twelve, He enlarged upon the parable and read them a lesson which they would have need to remember amid the privations of their apostolic ministry in days to come. He had called them to “ leave all and follow Him.” It was not for them to lay up treasures on earth. Their treasure was in Heaven—a better treasure, secure from decay and plunder ; and if their hearts were there and their eyes turned thither, they would be well content and never fret about their worldly estate or be afraid of the morrow. Fretting is faithless. If they were heathen, it would be natural for them to be troubled about food

and raiment ; but believing in God, they should trust His fatherly care. He feeds the wild birds and clothes the wild flowers with more than royal beauty ; and will He let His children lack ? And fretting is foolish too, embittering the present with apprehensions which are seldom realised.

“ Troubles that never come make most grey hair ;  
And backs are bent by loads they never bear.”

The golden secret lies in seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, doing each day's duty and trusting Him for the morrow.

One day distressful tidings arrived from Jerusalem. Nowhere was the passion for liberty so strong or hatred of the Roman tyranny so keen as in Galilee, and nowhere did the Messianic Hope, the expectation of a Coming Deliverer, enkindle more frequent insurrection. Hence the Galileans were in ill odour with the masterful Procurator Pontius Pilate, and he had now added another to the long catalogue of his severities. A company of Galileans visiting the Holy City had incurred his suspicion, and his officers had fallen upon them in the Temple-court and massacred them, in the grim language of the Evangelist, “ mingling their blood with their sacrifices.” Several of them, belonging to the neighbourhood where the Lord was now engaged, had escaped and returned home with a report of the atrocity. It horrified the community, all the more that it was a Jewish belief that calamity evinced divine displeasure and the sufferer's guilt. “ Who,”  
Job iv. 7. it was written, “ ever perished, being innocent ? or where were the righteous cut off ? ” This was the vexing thought of the people when they heard

the tidings, and they recalled another disaster which had befallen at Jerusalem recently, when a tower by the Pool of Siloam collapsed and crushed eighteen persons to death.

There was indeed a moral in the disaster, but it was not the moral which they were disposed to draw. "You are fancying," said Jesus, "that these Galileans were found sinners beyond all the Galileans because this has befallen them? No, I tell you; no, but unless you repent, you will all perish likewise." What did He mean? It was their rebelliousness, inspired by their conception of the Messiah as a national deliverer and their expectation of His immediate advent, that had provoked the massacre of those Galileans; and their fate was a premonition of the doom which must inevitably overtake the whole nation if it persisted in its turbulence. Rome would surely lose patience and quench the ever smouldering sedition in blood. So indeed it came to pass some forty years later when Jerusalem was overthrown by Titus and the Jewish people scattered over the face of the earth. It was their secular dream of a Messianic King and a Messianic Kingdom that ruined them; and meanwhile the hope of averting disaster lay in their recognition of the true Messiah and their submission to His gracious and peaceful dominion.

It was now their day of grace, but it was swiftly passing, and by a parable He warned them of the doom which would surely befall them unless they repented betimes. He told of a husbandman who had a fig tree growing not by the wayside but in the rich soil of his vineyard. Set there, it should have been fruitful, but for three successive years it remained barren. He lost

patience. "Cut it down," said he to his vinedresser. "Why should it keep the ground idle?" "Sir," pleaded the vinedresser, "let it be for this year too, until I dig about it and manure it on the chance of its bearing fruit. Else you will cut it down." It was a picture of the Jewish people, so highly favoured, so obdurately irresponsible. Would they, in these their days of final probation, repent and be saved?

Again, one Sabbath Day He was teaching in a village synagogue. In the congregation there was a woman who for eighteen years had been crippled, apparently by rheumatism, and He took pity on her. "My woman," said He, laying His hands on her, "you are unloosed from your infirmity." It gladdened the worshippers when they saw their poor neighbour no longer crooked and helpless, but the Ruler of the Synagogue was displeased. The miracle was a violation of the Rabbinical law which, as we have seen, enjoined that only where life was in danger was it permissible to apply remedies on the Sabbath. "Are there not," said he to the applauding congregation, "six days when you should work? On them therefore come and be healed and not on the Sabbath Day." His colleagues signified approval, and Jesus turned indignantly upon them. "You hypocrites!" He cried, "you play-actors! Does not each of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from its stall and lead it away to watering?" It was an appeal to the instinct of humanity, all the more effective in view of the Rabbis' casuistical manipulation of their Sabbath law in the case alleged. To carry water to a beast in its stall would have been Sabbath-breaking; but since the beast must be watered, it was permissible to untether it and lead it out to the water

and let it drink of its own accord. Where a beast, valuable as property, was concerned, they could thus evade the regulation ; “ and should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom,” says our Lord, deftly employing their theory of sickness as an argument against them, “ Satan has bound, look you, for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath Day ? ”



## JOURNEYING TO JERUSALEM

Mt. xix. 1a. Lk. xiii. 22-30 ; Mt. vii. 13, 14, viii. 11, 12. Lk. xiii. 31-33. Jo. vii. 2-10. Lk. xi. 37, 38, xiv (xvii. 5, 6), xv (Mt. xviii. 12, 13)-xvi. 12, 14, 15, 19-31, xvii. 11-21, xviii. 1-14, ix. 51-56, x. 17-20, 25-37.

IT was now time for Him to turn His steps toward Jerusalem. He travelled southward through the midst of Galilee, teaching as He went ; and once when He was discoursing on "salvation," one of His hearers, evidently impressed but reluctant to face the personal issue, essayed to evade it by raising a theological question much debated in the Rabbinical schools. The general belief was that "all Israel would have a portion in the world to come," but some argued that even as only two of the multitude that left Egypt inherited the Promised Land, so would it be in the days of the Messiah ; and all agreed that since there was no salvation outside the pale of the chosen race, the myriads of heathendom were doomed to perdition. "Lord," asked this man, "are they few that are being saved ?"

The Lord answered by quoting a fancy of the ancient moralists which had passed into a common proverb. There are two paths, they said—the path of virtue and the path of vice, the former entered by a narrow gate and winding steep and difficult up rugged heights, and the latter entered by a wide gate and running broad and smooth through pleasant places. The easy path ended in ruin, but, said the moralists, because it was easy,

most men chose it ; the difficult path led to life, but few had the courage to pursue it. " Strive," said the Lord, addressing not His questioner alone but all the company, " to enter by the narrow gate. And strive betimes, while the gate is open. Soon it will be closed ; your day of opportunity will be past."

And thus He taught His hearers a twofold lesson. First He urged them to personal and immediate decision. The question was not whether few or many would be saved, but whether they were of the number. And He warned them against building upon their privileges. Unless they entered the narrow gate and trod the steep path, it would avail them nothing that they were Jews, children of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. They would surely find themselves excluded, and to their bitter chagrin would see in the enjoyment of the felicity which they had forfeited many from east and west and north and south, despised heathen who, lacking their privileges, had nobly striven and pursued the upward path.

He had just spoken when several strangers accosted Him. They were Pharisees, yet their errand was friendly ; for it should not be overlooked that the Pharisees were not all His enemies. There were not a few who, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa, were His disciples at heart, though they were meanwhile afraid to confess Him. Eventually they espoused His cause ; and even now, so far as prudence permitted, they exhibited their good will, frequently entertaining Him at their tables, as St. Luke especially is careful to record, and otherwise befriending Him. These Pharisees now approached to warn Him of an imminent danger.

Cf. Ac.

xv. 5.

Cf. vii. 36-

50, xi. 37,

38, xiv.

I-24.

Travelling southward, He had reached the uplands to the west of the Lake, and was only some fifteen miles distant from Tiberias, the seat of Herod Antipas. It had come to their knowledge that the crafty Tetrarch, alarmed by the popularity of our Lord and apprehending, after the suspicious manner of a tyrant, a political insurrection, purposed arresting Him and dealing summarily with Him. And so they had come to warn Him. "Begone," said they, "and journey hence, because Herod wishes to kill you." "Go," He replied, "and tell this fox: 'Look you, I cast out demons to-day and to-morrow, and on the third day I finish My work.' " It was Jewish phraseology. He was immortal till His work was done, and meanwhile He would fearlessly prosecute His ministry. But not for long. His work would soon be accomplished, and then Herod would have his desire. "To-day and to-morrow I must journey on"—on to Jerusalem—"because it is unfitting that a prophet should perish outwith Jerusalem."

He continued His journey. Following the southward route, He would pass by Cana. Surely He would linger at that town of gracious memories, and it is there probably that we next find Him. It was the Sabbath, the day, as we have seen, for social entertainment; and a leading Pharisee invited Him to dine at his house with a company of his friends, Pharisees and Rabbis. It is ever the manner of petty dignitaries to be jealous of their honour, and to the kindly host's vexation some unpleasantness arose among his guests as they took their places at table over the question of precedence. Perhaps the occasion was that our Lord had been assigned the place of honour, but He took no notice at the moment and the banquet proceeded.

The incident cast a cloud on the entertainment, and the company furtively observed how Jesus comported Himself. Presently their attention was arrested. It was the fashion, as we have seen, for strangers to attend a banquet and witness the festivity, and a man suffering from dropsy had entered and was standing in front of Jesus. "Is it allowable," He asked the sullen company, "to heal on the Sabbath? or is it not?" Of course, according to their law, it was not allowable in this instance, since the man's life was in no immediate danger; but they knew how He had already dealt with that regulation, and no one answered. Without more ado He healed the man, and then silenced criticism by His wonted appeal to humanity: "Which of you, when his son or even his ox falls into a well, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath Day?"

His lips were now opened, and He playfully bantered them on their behaviour a little ago. "If," said He, "you be invited by any one to a wedding-feast, do not take your place on the first couch, in case a more honourable person have been invited by him; and your host and his will say to you: 'Give place to this man.' And then, crest-fallen, you will set about taking the last place. No, when you are invited, go and recline in the last place, that, when your host comes, he may say to you: 'Friend, come up higher.' Then you will have glory in the sight of all your fellow-guests." It made His rebuke the more effective that it was an amplified quotation from the Book of Proverbs, and Pr. xxv.  
6, 7. there were Rabbis among His hearers. What could they do but hang their heads when they were rebuked out of those Scriptures which it was their business to study and interpret? And if the scene was

indeed the village of Cana, then it appears why He spoke of "a wedding-feast." The last banquet which He had attended there, had been a wedding-feast; and He intended a contrast between the kindness of that homely gathering of peasant-folk and the absurdity of this company of arrogant ecclesiastics.

Then He completed their discomfiture by turning to His host, who had surely been relishing such trenchant dealing with his ill-mannered guests and feeling how hollow and heartless were such formal entertainments. "When," said Jesus, "you make a breakfast or a dinner, do not call your friends or brothers or kinsfolk, in case they invite you back and you get a requital. No, when you make an entertainment, invite poor folk and maimed and lame and blind; and blessed will you be, because they have no requital for you, and you will have your requital at the resurrection of the righteous."

Here one of the company nodded approval and, thinking to rehabilitate himself, ejaculated sententiously: "Blessed is he who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God!" It was a mere pious platitude, and there was nothing that our Lord disliked more. Once, on the occasion of some shortcoming like their failure in dealing with the epileptic at Casarea Philippi, when the Apostles essayed to veil it beneath a sanctimonious petition: "Increase our faith," He turned sharply upon them. It was not more faith that they needed but more devotion, more self-forgetfulness. Ever so little faith, where there is devotion, will achieve impossibilities. "If," said He, "you have faith as a grain of mustard, you would have said to this mulberry-tree 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea,' and it would have obeyed you." And so here He answers

with a parable, telling how a man invited a numerous company to a grand dinner. The day arrived and he sent round his slave, according to the oriental custom, to remind them of their engagement and acquaint them with the precise hour. "Come," was his message, "for everything is now ready"; but they all cried off on various pretexts. Said one: "I have just bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Pray, hold me excused." Said another: "I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I am going to test them. Pray, hold me excused." "I have just married a wife," said a third, "and this is why I cannot come." They were all very polite, but their politeness was simply an aggravation of the insult. The host was indignant. He determined that, though they stayed away, the entertainment would go forward, and he bade his slave go out to the streets and alleys of the town and bring in all the poor, needy creatures there. These trooped into the banquet-hall, but they were not enough to fill it; and the host, resolved that not a place would be vacant, bade the slave extend his quest. "Go out of the town, and bring all the forlorn wretches whom you find tramping the roads or crouching beneath the hedges. Take no refusal: compel them to come in."

Like the parable of the barren fig tree, it was a warning of the judgment impending over the Jewish people who had so slighted God's gracious invitation, insulting Him by lip-service and hypocritical pretension. The denizens of street and alley were the sinners of Israel—those taxgatherers and harlots whom, to the scandal of the Pharisees, Jesus befriended; and the wanderers by the highways and hedges were



the Gentiles whom the Jews accounted unclean, outcasts from the love and grace of God.

Since He was on His way to Jerusalem, the idea had got abroad in the town that the time for the grand *dénouement* had at last arrived and He would now openly assume His Messianic dignity and claim His throne; and as He took His departure an eager crowd trooped after Him, thinking to escort Him to the capital and witness His triumph. Knowing what was in their minds, He turned and told them the stern reality. It was not a triumph that awaited Him at Jerusalem but a dread ordeal, and no one need follow Him who was not prepared to sacrifice all on earth that was dear and precious to him and encounter for His sake suffering and shame. "Count the cost" He said. "Who would commence a watch-tower in his vineyard without first counting the cost, lest he should have to leave it unfinished, a monument of his improvidence, the jest of every passer-by? What king would take the field against another without reckoning his forces and ascertaining his chance of victory?" His miracles had enkindled their enthusiasm, but it was a false enthusiasm and it would quickly evaporate in face of the stern realities. They had a proverb, "As salt to flesh," and it was apposite here. As salt to flesh, so is clear-eyed devotion, the courage which never flinches, to the achievement of a high enterprise; and a blind enthusiasm is like salt which loses its bite.

Pursuing His journey, He came to Nazareth, the town where He had passed His childhood and youth and where Mary and her sons and daughters still dwelt. After His bitter experience there about a year

ago He would have little pleasure in returning thither, and His forebodings were realised. His "brethren" had continued unbelieving, and they greeted Him with sneers. The Feast of Tabernacles, which began that year (28 A.D.) on September 23, was at hand, and they were just getting ready for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Why, they asked, had He stayed so long in Galilee? It was a year and a half since He had visited the capital, and His disciples there were wondering at His absence. If He were indeed the Messiah, the Holy City was His place, and it was high time that He was going thither. "Remove hence and be off to Judæa, that your disciples may behold the works which you are doing. No one does a thing in private when he is seeking public recognition. If you are doing these things, manifest yourself to the world."

Their talk grieved Him, but He answered them gently. They did not understand. When the appointed time arrived, He would go to Jerusalem, but that time had not yet arrived. "Go you up to the Feast. I am not going up to this Feast; for My time has not yet been fulfilled."

The enmity which had so nearly wrought His destruction on His previous visit to Nazareth still persisted, and no Pharisee entertained Him. But even this turned to good. Neglected by the religious and respectable, He was welcomed by the social outcasts—"the taxgatherers and the sinners"—who were glad of an opportunity of gathering about Him and hearing His message. And just as Levi the tax- Cf. Lk. v. gatherer at Capernaum had entertained Him in 27-32. his house and invited a company of his former associates to meet Him, so it happened now at Nazareth. In

the judgment of His enemies it was a public scandal. "This fellow," they cried, "is receiving sinners and eating with them!" And a band of Pharisees and Rabbis visited the banquet-hall to frown upon the company and find, if they might, some pretext for interference.

It was not the first time that He had been censured for befriending sinners, but never had He presented so noble an apology as now. He appealed to that human instinct which invests whatever we have lost with a peculiar preciousness and moves us to seek its recovery; and He illustrated it by three parables. "What think you?" said He, surveying those ungracious faces. "If a man has got a hundred sheep and one of them be wandered, does he not leave the ninety-nine and travel over the mountains, seeking the wanderer? And if he succeed in finding it, verily I tell you that he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not wandered. He puts it on his shoulders joyfully, and on getting home calls together his friends and his neighbours. 'Rejoice with me,' he says to them; 'for I have found my sheep, the lost one.' So," explains the Master, "will there be joy in Heaven over one repenting sinner rather than over ninety-nine righteous." Indeed His hearers needed no explanation; for did not their Scriptures love to speak of the Lord as the Shepherd of Israel, "seeking that which was lost, and bringing again that which was driven away, and binding up that which was broken, and strengthening that which was sick"? Cf. Ezek. xxxiv.

Again, think of a woman who has ten shillings and loses one of them—how she lights a candle and sweeps

out every corner till she finds it, and how glad she is then. "Rejoice with me," she cries to her friends and neighbours; "for I have found the shilling which I lost." "So, I tell you, there arises joy in the presence of the angels of God over one repenting sinner."

But a sinner is more than a lost sheep or a lost shilling. He is a lost son; and this truth our Lord proclaims in a third parable, the most moving He ever spoke. It is the story of a generous father, a prosperous farmer, and his two sons. As so often happens in families, the latter were very dissimilar in disposition. The elder was a steady and industrious lad, but he was also selfish, surly, and conceited. The younger was a merry lad, fonder of play than of work; withal adventurous, discontented with his narrow life on the farm and ambitious of seeing something of the large world. It brought out the worst which was in him that his brother was hard on him; and presently he could endure it no longer, and he determined that he would leave home and try his fortune abroad. So he came to his father and preferred a bold request. When the old man died, his sons would inherit his property. According to the general rule the elder would get two thirds and the younger Cf. Dt. xxi. 17. one third, and he begged his father to give him his portion now. It was indeed a bold request, but it was by no means unreasonable. The thing was often done when there was good reason. And there was good reason in this case. The continual bickering of the lads had grieved their good father, and he recognised that the boy would never get on if he stayed and might do well if he got the chance of pushing his

own way in the world. And so he granted the request. He might have given him merely an allowance ; but, anxious that he should have every opportunity, he gave him his full portion. For all his generosity he was a prudent man, and he would not, like King Lear, beggar himself by resigning all his property and making himself dependent on his sons. It was understood that on his decease his elder son would inherit all that he retained ; but meanwhile it was his and he kept it in his own hands. His elder son had no immediate need of it, for he lived at home with his father, sharing his income and his confidence.

Unhappily his generosity was abused. The young adventurer went abroad and fell into evil company and squandered his all. And what of the elder ? It was largely his fault that the trouble had arisen ; for he should have borne considerably with his wayward brother from the first, and now surely he should have supported his father by doing his best to repair the mischief. Even if he had not been originally so much to blame, magnanimity would have prompted him to generous behaviour now. But his selfish soul was aggrieved, and he thought it an injustice that he too had not got immediate possession of his patrimony. This was the reward of his steadiness and industry : he was no better than his father's servant, dependent on his bounty, which he regarded as bare and niggardly.

It aggrieved him the more that his father kept mourning for his lost son ; and his indignation broke out one day when the prodigal returned. The lad had fallen very low. His money was all spent, and he was glad—disgusting though the office was to a Jew—

to get employment as a swineherd. There was a famine in the country ; and when he found himself, in sheer starvation, gnawing a carob-pod from the unclean creatures' trough, he realised his abject misery. It was intolerable. "I will be up and away to my father!" he cried. "And I will say: 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in your sight. I no longer deserve to be called your son: make me as one of your hirelings.'"

Away he went. As he neared home footsore and tattered, his father spied him in the distance and, recognising him, ran to meet him and embraced and kissed him. "Father," said the lad, "I have sinned against Heaven and in your sight. I no longer deserve to be called your son——" He got no farther. His father shouted to his slaves: "Quick! bring out a robe—his former robe" he added—"and put it on him." Right well they understood. When the lad went away in his bravery, he had left his old robe behind, and his father had treasured that memorial of the wanderer. Often had they seen him tenderly unfolding it and bedewing it with tears. And now that his boy had come home, he would have his mis-doing forgotten like an evil dream. "Bring out a robe," he cried, and only one robe would do—"the robe," as old Matthew Henry has it, "which he wore before he ran his ramble." "Bring it out and put it on him ; and give him a ring for his hand and sandals for his feet ; and fetch the fatted calf and slay it ; and let us eat and make merry. For this son of mine was dead and is come to life ; he was lost and is found."

At the time the elder son was out on the farm, and on his return at eventide he heard the jubilation.



"What may this mean?" he demanded of a servant, and on learning he flew into a passion and would not enter the house. His father came out and remonstrated with him. "Look you," he answered, "all these years I have slaved for you and never transgressed your command; and you never even gave me a kid to make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots—when he came, you slew the fatted calf for him." "My child," said the good old man, "you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. We had to make merry and rejoice; for this brother of yours was dead and is come to life; he was lost and is found."

The parable needed no interpretation. In the elder brother the Pharisees would recognise their own portraiture, and they would realise how unlike God's was their attitude to sinners. He is the Heavenly Father with a father's heart toward all the children of men; and the difference between a saint and a sinner is not that the one is a son of God and the other a son of the Devil, but that a saint is a son once lost and now restored, and a sinner a lost son still in the far country, lost and not yet found. The whole Gospel lies in that word "lost." As our Lord used it, it is the tenderest word in Holy Scripture, throbbing with an infinite compassion. For it signifies not an outcast doomed to perdition but a wanderer from the Father's House, still dear to His heart, mourned over, longed for, and sought after.

It was a gracious parable; and is there not an especial graciousness in our Lord's attitude toward the Pharisees? He was the Friend of sinners, but He

was the Friend of Pharisees too. He does not denounce those narrow-hearted men. He recognises that they also were children of the Heavenly Father, and pleads with them to acknowledge the sinners as their brethren, as dear as they to the Father's heart. "This son of yours" said the elder brother: "This brother of yours" his father answered—"my son no less than you, claiming of you a brotherly affection."

And now, turning to "the disciples"—those taxgatherers and sinners whose hearts He had won and who were assembled to honour Him and confess their faith in Him—He discourses to them. Evidently the question had arisen what those taxgatherers should now do with the wealth which they had acquired as agents of the Roman tyranny and too often by vexatious exactions; and He answers it by a parable. He tells of a steward who had been employed by a wealthy magnate to manage his estate and had shamefully abused his trust, not only appropriating much of the revenue but oppressing the tenantry. A complaint was addressed to the master, who promptly discharged him and required a statement of accounts. "What am I to do?" he cried. "I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg. . . . I know what to do, that when I am removed from the stewardship, they may welcome me into their homes." He summoned the defaulters. "How much," he asked one, "are you owing to my lord?" "A hundred casks of oil," was the answer. "Here is your bill. Quick! sit down and enter fifty." "And how much are you owing?" he asked another. "A hundred quarters of wheat." "Here is your bill. Enter eighty." See what a cunning rogue he was. It was

he who had been plundering them, but he lays the blame on the master and claims the credit of procuring them those large remissions. And he knew his men and paid each his price—here 50 per cent., there only 20. But after the fashion of a trickster he reckoned unduly on their simplicity, fancying that when he was thrown on the world, they would gratefully come to their supposed benefactor's rescue.

It was a clever stratagem, and if it did not work out as the rascal hoped, it served him in another direction. For on its coming to the master's knowledge it amused him and softened his resentment. And there was a salutary lesson in the story. If a worldling be thus solicitous for his temporal interests, should we be less solicitous for our eternal welfare, less provident of the hereafter? "Make yourselves friends," says our Lord, "with the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails, they may welcome you into the eternal tabernacles." *Mammon* was a Syriac word for "riches"; and "mammon of unrighteousness" is a Hebrew phrase. Just Ps. xxiii. 3. as, when the shepherd-psalmist speaks of "paths of righteousness," he means paths which lead home, serving a path's proper purpose, unlike the sheep-tracks on the moor which fade away, leading the traveller astray and leaving him bewildered—"delusive tracks which lead nowhere," so by "the mammon of unrighteousness" our Lord means this world's vain riches which, unlike the "unfailing Lk. xii. 33. treasure in the heavens," perish in the using, disappointing our hopes, and at last slipping from our grasp and leaving us forlorn. "Employ the perishing wealth of this passing world," is His counsel,

“in helping others in their need and so winning their love, that when you leave it all behind you and pass into Eternity, they may greet you there and welcome you into the eternal tabernacles.” It was the eve of the Feast of Tabernacles, that joyous festival when the worshippers made them booths of leafy branches in remembrance of the tents where their fathers had dwelt in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. Those outcasts had no share in the glad celebration, but it was theirs to win the nobler felicity which the joyous festival foreshadowed.

Cf. Lev.  
xxiii. 33-  
44; Neh.  
viii. 15.

Here perhaps is the place of that saying which, recorded by none of the Evangelists, is so frequently ascribed to our Lord in the early Christian literature: “Show yourselves approved bankers.”<sup>1</sup> Our worldly wealth, He meant, is not our own: it is a trust which God has committed to us; and our duty, while it remains in our hands, is to employ it for His glory and our own eternal profit. We are His bankers, and He will one day reclaim His deposit and call us to account. Meanwhile we must be scrupulously faithful. “One who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much.” It is thus that we shall approve ourselves and win a larger and enduring trust. “If you have not shown yourselves faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust you with the true? And if you have not shown yourselves faithful in what is another’s, who will give you what is your own?”

The Pharisees were listening as He discoursed thus to His fellow-guests, and his counsel on the use of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my *Unwritten Sayings of Our Lord*, vi.

money touched them in the quick ; for they were fond of money and, like greedy ecclesiastics in every age, they were guilty of worse exaction than the taxgatherers ever perpetrated. They sneered at His admonition, and He turned upon them indignantly and addressed to them a parable, at once rebuking them and enforcing His exhortation to the taxgatherers : " Make yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness." He drew a moving contrast—a rich man in gorgeous attire feasting in his mansion and a beggar crouching at his gate, a mass of loathsome sores, and hungrily eyeing the revelry. He named the wretch Lazarus, the Greek form of Eleazar, which signifies " God has helped," expressing at once his earthly destitution and his humble piety. His plight was indeed woeful, yet he was not utterly forlorn. No human hand dressed his sores, but the pariah dogs, his companions in misery, more pitiful than his fellow-men, licked them with their soft, warm tongues ; <sup>1</sup> and he was compassed by invisible angels, God's ministering spirits.

These were his helpers—the dogs and the angels ! And now another and more startling contrast is presented. The beggar died, and he was borne away by angel hands " to Abraham's bosom." Here and throughout the sequel our Lord in depicting the Hereafter employs the Jewish imagery wherewith His hearers were familiar. The Unseen World—the Hebrew *Sheol* and the Greek *Hades*—was conceived as the common domain of the departed. The righteous and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Darwin, *Descent of Man*, I. iv : " I have myself seen a dog who never passed a cat who lay sick in a basket, and was a great friend of his, without giving her a few licks with his tongue, the surest sign of kind feeling in a dog."

the unrighteous dwelt apart ; and it was a sore aggravation of the latter's misery that they beheld the righteous in the enjoyment of that felicity which now they might never know. And the image of that felicity was a joyous festival presided over by Abraham, the father of the Jewish race.

Cf. Book of  
Enoch  
xxvii. 3 ;  
Rev. xiv.  
10.

The place of honour was next to Abraham ; and since at an ancient banquet the guests reclined on couches, leaning on their left elbows, the honoured guest lay in front of the host, and when he would talk with him, he leaned back on his breast, as the beloved disciple leaned back on Jesus' breast in the Upper Room.

Cf. Jo. xiii.  
25.

Presently the rich man died, and from his place of woe he beheld Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. It was a grim reversal of their old relationship. "Father Abraham," he cried, "have pity on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue." "My child," answered Abraham, "remember that you got your good things in your lifetime just as Lazarus got the evil. And now there is a wide and impassable gulf between us." "I pray you then, father," he pleaded, "send him to my father's house to warn my five brothers, lest they too come to this place of torment." "They have Moses and the Prophets," said Abraham : "let them hearken to them." "Nay, father Abraham, but if one from the dead go to them, they will repent." "If they do not hearken to Moses and the Prophets, not even though one rise from the dead will they be persuaded."

The Pharisees and Rabbis would perceive His meaning. How often had they demanded of Him "a sign from heaven" in attestation of His Messianic claim ! And all the while its attestation was written plain on



the pages of those Scriptures which they professed to revere. And so He tells them as He had told their colleagues in Jerusalem eighteen months ago : " There Jo. v. 45, is one who condemns you—Moses, in whom<sup>46</sup> you have set your hope. For had you believed Moses, you would have believed Me ; for he wrote of Me."

Continuing His journey, the Lord approached the Samaritan frontier ; and ere passing it He stopped somewhere on the Galilean side. His arrival was expected in the neighbourhood, since the town had lately been visited by two of His seventy heralds ; and He found a pitiful company awaiting Him—ten lepers. They had gathered there to waylay Him as He passed, in the hope that He would heal them. At least one of them was a Samaritan ; but " adversity makes strange bedfellows," and forgetting in their misery their racial antipathy, they were herded together and greeted Him with the cry : " Jesus, Master, have pity on us ! " He bade them betake themselves to their priests, whose office it was to examine a patient who was cured of that loathsome disease, and in case of a veritable recovery absolve him of the ban precluding him from social intercourse. They obeyed, and as they went they found themselves healed. They all hastened on to their priests, eager for absolution—all save that Samaritan ; and instead of pushing on to Mount Gerizim he turned back and poured out his gratitude at his Benefactor's feet. And he was a despised Samaritan ! " Were not the ten cleansed ? " exclaimed Jesus. " And where are the nine ? Were there none of them to return and give glory to God except this alien ? Arise, and go your way. Your faith has saved you."

Since it was a frontier town, the racial antipathy was strong there, and His commendation of the grateful Samaritan displeased the bystanders, especially some Pharisees. They retaliated with a sneer at His Messianic claim, so preposterous as it seemed in a poor wayfarer, a fugitive from the Tetrarch's enmity. "When," they asked, "is the Kingdom of God coming?" And He told them that it would not come in the unspiritual fashion they supposed. "The Kingdom of God is not coming with observation"—like a planet flashing out in the firmament on the astrologer's gaze. "Nor will they say 'Look you, here! or yonder!' For, look you, the Kingdom of God is among you." It had already come, if only they had hearts to recognise it.

While He thus answered those sneering Pharisees, the Lord knew well how trying to the faith of His Jewish disciples was the slow progress, as they deemed it, of His cause and how sorely they were tempted to lose heart. And so He encouraged them with a parable. He told them how a widow had been wronged and sought legal redress. It was a clear case, but the judge in oriental fashion delayed decision in the hope of a bribe. Again and again she waited on him, till at length she got angry. This brought him to reason. "Though," he soliloquised, "I have no fear of God nor regard for man, yet because this widow is a bother to me, I will do her justice, lest," he added half jestingly, "she keep on coming and end by taking her fists to me." So effectual is importunity; and, argues our Lord, if it prevailed with that heartless and corrupt judge, surely God, a righteous Judge, a gracious Father, will hear your cry and fulfil your desire. If He keep

you waiting, it is for a wise reason. Always pray, and never lose heart.

The Pharisaic spirit was rampant in that border town, and He rebuked it by another parable. Just then bands of worshippers were setting out for Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, and He pictured a scene in the Temple-court. A Pharisee was standing there in the Pharisaic attitude with his face toward the Sanctuary; and hard by was a taxgatherer. It was seldom that an outcast visited the sacred precincts, but he had been awakened to a sense of his sinfulness and had ventured thither in humble penitence. With a disdainful glance at him the Pharisee prayed thus—"prayed to himself" says our Lord, since his prayer was one which never reached Heaven: "O God, I thank Thee that I am not like the rest of men—extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers, or indeed like this taxgatherer. I fast"—not merely, as the Law required, on special occasions but, after the supererogatory fashion of his order, every Monday and Thursday—"twice a week; I tithe all my income." And what of the taxgatherer? He stood with bowed head and, smiting his breast, cried: "O God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" Just as the Pharisee posed as superlatively righteous, so the taxgatherer felt himself the chief of sinners.

"I am alone the villain of the earth,  
And feel I am so most."

The Pharisee's prayer never reached God's ear; but the taxgatherer's did, and he went home forgiven.

And now, resuming His journey, He crossed the frontier and reached the first station on His route

through Samaria. His heralds had duly visited the place, and He expected a welcome; but to His disappointment He encountered a hostile reception. It would seem that the troops of Galilean pilgrims to the Feast in their passage along the route had exasperated the populace; and when Jesus and His defenceless company appeared, they met the storm. It appears that they were subjected to actual violence; for His disciples were indignant, and James and John, "the Sons of Thunder," proposed that He should authorise them, like Elijah of old, to call down fire from heaven and consume their assailants. Cf. 2 Ki. i. 10, 11. He turned and rebuked them; and they proceeded to the next village on their route.

There they fared no better. The whole country was up in arms, and there was nothing for it but that He should abandon His design of preaching in Samaria and push on to Judæa. Somewhere by the way He encountered the Seventy returning to meet Him and report how they had sped. Evidently it was after He had passed into Judæa, since they were ignorant of His disappointment in Samaria. They were exulting in the wonders which they had been privileged to accomplish. "Lord," said they, "even the demons are subject to us in your name." Their exultation jarred upon Him, knowing as He did how little their ministry in Samaria had availed and withal perceiving from their surprise at the miracles which they had wrought how small had been their faith in His commission. In truth He had been expecting more. "I was beholding," said He, "Satan fallen like a flash of lightning from the sky. Look you, I have given you authority to trample upon serpents and scorpions

Ps. xci. 13.

and on all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall do you wrong. But," He added, observing how the good men's faces had fallen and reminding them that, however small their success, a transcendent dignity was theirs, "do not rejoice at this—that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are enrolled in Heaven."

Cf. Ex.  
xxxii. 32,  
33; Mal.  
iii. 16;  
Phil. iv. 3;  
Heb. xii.  
23; Rev.  
iii. 5.

Presently they reached a town which, though unnamed by the Evangelist, was surely Jericho, the ancient "City of Palms," for this reason if for no other, that they are next found at Bethany, and Jericho was the last stage on the route to the sacred capital. It was situated on a rich plain bordering the Jordan, fully 800 feet below sea-level; and the road thence to Jerusalem was not only steep but perilous, since it was beset by brigands whose lawless deeds earned it of old the grim name of "the Ascent of Blood." Difficult and dangerous as it was, it was much frequented not only by travelling merchants but by priests, inasmuch as there was scant accommodation in the Holy City for the ministers of the sanctuary and half of the officiating course lodged in the City of Palms, travelling daily to and fro.

During His stay there the Lord preached, presumably in the synagogue since His hearers were seated. His theme was "Eternal Life," and when He finished a Rabbi rose and put a question to Him—one of those captious questions so often addressed to Him by the expert theologians of Judæa in the hope of puzzling Him or betraying Him into some heretical position and thus discrediting Him with the populace. "Teacher," said he, "what am I to do to inherit 'eternal life'?"

With that dexterity which never failed Him in dialectical encounters, our Lord avoided the snare by inviting His questioner to state out of the fulness of his own professional knowledge what he regarded as the scriptural doctrine. Prompt and glib came the answer : “ ‘ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might and with all thine understanding ’ and ‘ thy neighbour as thyself.’ ” It was a felicitous combination of two precepts of the Law excellently summarising “ the whole duty of man ” at once toward God and toward his fellows ; and it was not propounded by this Rabbi on the spur of the moment : it was a commonplace of Jewish theology. Our Lord approved it. “ The right answer ” said He. “ This do, and you will live.”

Dt. vi. 5 ;  
Lev. xix.  
18.

It was indeed admirable doctrine, but the Rabbis spoiled it by a characteristic limitation, defining “ a neighbour ” as a fellow-Jew. The commandment, as they interpreted it, required them to love “ the children of their people ” ; but there the duty rested, and to “ the children of strangers ” they owed only hatred and scorn. Here the Rabbi saw his opportunity. “ And who,” he asked, “ is my ‘ neighbour ’ ? ”

Our Lord answered with an apposite parable, telling how one evening as a man was travelling down that notorious road from Jerusalem to Jericho, he was assailed by brigands, who plundered him and left him lying half dead. Presently a Priest came down the road, returning from his day’s ministry in the Temple, and on espying the man lying there he took alarm. If he lingered, he too might be attacked ; and besides he could do no good since the man was apparently dead.



So he hurried past. Then came a Levite, and he followed his superior's prudent example. By and by a Samaritan came jogging along on his ass ; and when he saw the unfortunate, he dismounted and, regardless of his own safety, dressed his wounds, according to the medical prescription of the time, with a healing lotion of oil and wine, and lifting him on his ass conveyed him to an inn. Though travelling on business he stopped with him, sitting up and tending him. He was a regular traveller, well known on the road and his credit good ; and as he was resuming his interrupted journey at an early hour, " toward the morrow," he interviewed the landlord and bespoke his kind offices. He deposited

Cf. Mt. two *denarii*—quite a handsome sum, since a  
 xx. 2. *denarius* was an ordinary day's wage at that period. " Take care of him," said he ; " and whatever more you may spend, I shall pay you on my return."

" Which of these three," said our Lord to the Rabbi, " do you fancy to have acted ' neighbour ' to the man who encountered the brigands ? " " The one who had pity on him," was the inevitable answer. " Go, and do you likewise."

It was a crushing discomfiture for His assailant and at the same time a salutary lesson for all His hearers, especially His own disciples who after their recent experience were thinking so resentfully of the Samaritans.

## MINISTRY AT JERUSALEM

Lk. x. 38-42. Jo. vii. 11-52 (Mt. xi. 28-30), viii. 12-x. 40. **Mt. xxiii.**  
37-39; Lk. xiii. 34, 35; Mt. xi. 25-27; Lk. x. 21, 22.

SETTING out from Jericho they travelled up the Ascent of Blood, and toward evening they reached the village of Bethany, lying within two miles of Jerusalem on the eastern side of the crest of Mount Olivet. There with her brother Lazarus and her sister Martha dwelt Mary the Magdalene whom about a year ago the Lord had rescued from her shame in Galilee; and this being the first occasion since that He had passed that way, He would not pass by the home which His grace had so blessed. At any time He would have received an overflowing welcome; but now it was the Feast of Tabernacles, and that Feast was not merely, as we have seen, a commemoration of the Wilderness Wanderings: it was the Feast of Harvest, and all the week the people kept holiday and expressed their gratitude for the abundance of their corn and wine by kindness to the poor, "eating the fat, and drinking the sweet, and sending portions unto him for whom nothing was prepared, and making great mirth."

**Ex. xxiii.**  
16; Dt.  
xvi. 13-15.

**Neh. viii.**  
9-18.

On His arrival the sisters were busy at their housewifery. Both alike were overjoyed to see Him, but they showed it in different ways. Martha, the elder and a notable housewife, would entertain Him royally, and she set to work dressing a grand supper; but Mary,

oblivious of all save her dear Saviour's presence, seated herself at His feet, those sacred feet which she had anointed with her precious nard and bedewed with her warm tears in the banquet-hall of Simon the Pharisee. There she sat listening to His gracious words and taking no part in the preparation of the good cheer and the spreading of the table. It annoyed Martha, all the more that, after a woman's fashion, she was disposed to be somewhat hard upon her erring sister ; and at last she lost patience. Heated and flustered, she broke in upon the conversation. " Lord," she cried, " do you not care that my sister has been leaving me alone to serve ? Bid her lend me a helping hand." He surveyed her with kindly amusement. " Martha, Martha," said He, glancing at the array of savoury dishes wherewith she was loading the table, " you are in a fret and stir about many things ; but a few are all we need—or rather just one ; for," He added, alluding to the benefactions of that hospitable season, " Mary has chosen the good

Pr. xiv. 17  
R.V.  
marg. ' portion,' which will not be taken away from her." It was a gentle rendering of the

ancient proverb : " Better a portion of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."

Next day the Lord proceeded from Bethany to Jerusalem. It was at once embarrassing and dangerous for Him to present Himself then in the Holy City. For He had intimated to His " brethren " at Nazareth that He would not attend the Feast of Tabernacles ; nor did He mean to attend it. His design was to travel slowly, preaching as He went ; but it had been frustrated by the hostility of the Samaritans, and thus He arrived at Jerusalem earlier

than He anticipated—"in the middle of the Feast," that is, since the celebration lasted a week, the fourth day, being the 26th of September since the Feast began that year on the 23rd. It would seem to His brethren that He had broken His word, and they would be quick to censure Him. Nor was this all. The rulers were meditating His destruction. It was some eighteen months since last He had visited the Holy City; and on His going thither then they regarded Him, on the report of their emissaries in Galilee, as liable to two charges—Sabbath-breaking and blasphemy—both which He had presently established, in their judgment, by His healing of the paralytic at Bethesda on the Sabbath Day and His subsequent defence. They had then attempted His arraignment on those capital charges, and He had escaped only by quitting the city and returning to Galilee. Their hostility had increased during the eighteen months which had since elapsed. It had deterred Him from attending the Passover that spring, and it confronted Him now when He appeared in their midst.

Cf. Jo.  
v. 18.  
Cf. Jo.  
vii. 1.

They would have promptly arrested Him and sentenced Him to death, but they were restrained by a prudential consideration. It was this—that His popularity had been growing all the while. He was the hero of the multitude, and they perceived that, if they meddled with Him, they would occasion a tumult. It was true that opinion regarding Him was divided in Jerusalem where He was less known than in Galilee; but even there His fame had engaged the general sympathy, and the very fact that opinion was divided would aggravate the trouble by ranging the citizens in mutual antagonism.

Such was the situation which faced Him on His arrival. Recognising its difficulty, He shunned need-  
 cf. Jo. vii. less provocation, yet He would not shirk His  
 10. mission. He betook Himself to the court of  
 the Temple and there addressed the assembled crowd.  
 The rulers—"the Jews," as St. John styles them—  
 were jealously watching Him, and even they were  
 impressed by His discourse, so gracious and wise.  
 "How," was their comment, "is this fellow so learned,  
 uneducated as He is?" Meant as a sneer, it was an  
 involuntary tribute; and He answered it by telling  
 them that the quality of His message proved His  
 divine mission, and if they would only put it to the  
 test, they would be persuaded of His claim. "My  
 teaching is not Mine but His who sent Me. If any one  
 has the will to do His will, he will discover regarding  
 My teaching whether it is of God or just My own  
 talk." It was a challenge to adopt toward His message  
 the attitude which is the condition of proficiency in  
 every domain of human attainment. "Do not think:  
 try," was the customary counsel of a distinguished  
 master of medical science to his students. And similar  
 was Rembrandt's to his pupil Hoogstraten: "Try to  
 put well in practice what you already know. In doing  
 so you will, in good time, discover the hidden things  
 which you now inquire about." And even so our  
 Lord told His critics that it was useless to argue  
 about His claims. Let them bring these to the test  
 of experience and consider them in the light of Holy  
 Scripture, and they would recognise Him as indeed  
 the Promised Saviour. His claims were attested by  
 their sacred Law, and yet for advancing these they  
 were seeking to kill Him.

Most of the crowd were strangers from afar, ignorant of the rulers' fatal design. "You are mad!" they cried. "Who is seeking to kill you?" He answered by recalling how He had been assailed for healing the paralytic last time He visited the city. The offence of the miracle was that it had been wrought on the Sabbath Day; and was it not unreasonable? A child born on the Sabbath was circumcised on the Sabbath following, since the Law required him to be circumcised "on the eighth day." They violated the Sabbath-law to keep the law of circumcision; and if the infliction of a wound on an infant's flesh was allowable on the Sabbath, much more, surely, was the healing of a man's body.

Cf. Gen.  
xvii. 12;  
Lev. xii. 3.

It was no secret in Jerusalem that the rulers had resolved to put Him to death, and it surprised the citizens who were present that no movement was made to arrest Him. Several of them were standing by and discussing what it meant. "Is not this," said one, "the man whom they are seeking to kill? and see! he is talking boldly and they are saying nothing to him." "Can it be," suggested another, "that the rulers have indeed perceived that this is the Christ?" "Nay," answered a third, "we know whence this man is, but when the Christ comes, no one perceives whence He is." Here is a characteristic example of that Rabbinical argumentation which so delighted the men of Jerusalem and too often blinded them to our Lord's claims. It was diversely foretold that the Messiah's advent would be a sudden surprise and that He would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David; and the Rabbis hence inferred that even as His prototype Moses had been carried away

Cf. Mal.  
iii. 1.  
Mic. v. 2;  
cf. Mt. ii.  
4-6.



into exile in the land of Midian and had then reappeared unexpectedly as his people's champion, so He would appear suddenly and mysteriously, none knew whence. And so it was a Jewish proverb that there are three things which present themselves unexpectedly—a treasure-trove, a scorpion by the path, and the Messiah. It was this idea that seemed to that theologically minded man of Jerusalem to rule out the suggestion that Jesus might be the Messiah. He was a Galilean, as every one knew; and when the Messiah came, no one would perceive whence He was.

This ended the *rencontre*. It was all very galling to the rulers. They would fain have arrested Him had they dared, but He was fortified by the popular sympathy and they retired in impotent malice. It exasperated them the more that many of the people were won to faith and confessed themselves His disciples. This naturally came to the knowledge of the Pharisees, the leaders of the popular party, and on their report a meeting of the Sanhedrin was convened, probably for the following morning. It was decided that immediate action should be taken, and the officers of the court were commissioned to effect His arrest. It proved no easy task; for they found Him surrounded by an eager and sympathetic crowd. They listened to His discourse and returned with a report. One sentence especially had impressed them. "A little while longer," He had said, "am I with you, and I go away to Him who sent Me. You will seek Me and will not find Me, and where I am, you cannot come." What could He mean? It was suggested that perhaps He intended quitting the Holy Land and betaking Himself to the Jewish communities abroad. This would be

a happy solution of their embarrassment, and meanwhile their officers were instructed to keep Him in observation.

Thus the days passed. The Feast of Tabernacles lasted a week, but the eighth day was devoted to "an holy convocation," "a solemn assembly"; Cf. Lev. xxiii. 36; Num. xxix. 35. and this was accounted the most important day of all. It was "the great day of the Feast," and the thoughts of the worshippers were then turned forward. As on the other days they had gratefully rejoiced in the ingathering of the corn and wine, so on the eighth they entreated a continuance of the Lord's goodness and prayed that in the year to come they might be blessed with rain, that "gift of God" so precious in the East. In every familiar thing our Lord found a heavenly parable; and even as He had told the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well of "the living water," He discoursed in like manner Cf. Jo. iv. 10-14. to the crowd in the Temple-court. "If any one thirsts," He cried, "let him come to Me and drink. Cf. Is. lv. 1. One who believes in Me, streams of living water will flow from his heart." It was familiar language, and it would recall to His hearers many a gracious passage of their Scriptures. Was it not written: "I will pour water upon him that is Is. xli. 3; xxxii. 2. thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground"? And again: "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Even so, says our Lord, one who opens Cf. Pr. xi. his heart to the Holy Spirit's grace not only has <sup>25</sup> within him an unfailing well-spring but, being watered himself, he waters others like a fountain in the desert.

This is but a sentence of His discourse, and it is plain from the impression which it made upon His hearers that He enlarged upon the gracious thought. Perhaps it was here that He spoke that golden word which

St. Matthew has preserved as a disconnected  
xi. 28-30.

fragment: "Come to Me, all you who are toiling and burdened, and I will refresh you. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I am meek and lowly in heart; and you will find refreshment for your souls. For My yoke is kindly and My burden light."

It is the figure of a weary beast toiling with its burden; and if we would understand it, we must observe that there is a difference between "a yoke" and "a burden."

A yoke was not a burden; on the contrary, it was an instrument, like our horse's collar, for carrying the burden. And a yoke was generally double. Two oxen were harnessed side by side with the shaft between them, and the yoke was a cross-bar fastened about their necks at either end. There were two ways in which the work might be rendered difficult. One was if the yoke were ill-fitting, so that it chafed the beasts' necks; and the other was if they were ill-matched and did not pull together. See then what our Lord means. He does not promise to release us from our burdens; for a burden of some sort is inevitable, and without it life were a poor, idle thing. He does not promise to remove our burdens, but He offers to help us with them.

"Have Me," He says, "for your yoke-fellow. Come into the traces by My side, and take My yoke upon you.

Mine is a kindly yoke"—the same word which

1 Cor. xiii.  
4; Eph. iv. St. Paul employs when he says: "Love is  
32.

long-suffering, Love is kind"; "Treat one another kindly and tenderly, forgiving each other just

as God in Christ forgave you." "Mine is a kindly yoke, one that fits well and does not chafe ; and I will be a true yoke-fellow. Your burden will be My burden, and with Me beside you it will be light."

Of course this is figurative language, and what does it mean in literal reality ? In those days " the yoke of the Law " was a common Jewish phrase ; the idea being that the Law was a rule of faith and conduct and by submitting to it a man could rightly discharge the duties of life. But the Law had proved a grievous yoke—" a yoke," as St. Peter said at the Council of Jerusalem, " which neither our <sup>Ac. xv. 10.</sup> fathers nor we were able to bear." And so our Lord here tells His hearers of a better yoke, a better rule of faith and conduct, than their old Law. " Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me ; and you will find refreshment for your souls."

His yoke, then, means the rule of faith and conduct which He substituted for the Jewish Law with its oppressive multitude of precepts and prohibitions ; and if we ask what this was, we have only to look at His example during the years of His earthly sojourn. There were two principles which regulated His every thought and action ; and these constitute the gracious yoke which He invites us to bear. One was Love ; and when He says " Take My yoke upon you," He means, in the first instance, " Bring love into your life." And if we do that, then our lives will be transfigured, and every hard and painful experience will be easy and glad. For, as St. Thomas à Kempis has it, " Love is a great thing, surely a great good, and it alone makes every burdensome thing light. For it carries a burden burdenless, and renders every bitter thing sweet and

pleasant to the taste." His other principle was the Will of God; and it makes a blessed difference when we follow Him here too: when we recognise God's sovereign purpose and His gracious hand in all our painful and sorrowful experiences, and are persuaded that these are no accidents, but His wise and beneficent appointments, serving high ends which, though hidden now, will one day be discovered, if only we accept them bravely and believingly and let Him have His way, saying with our Lord in His last dread agony: "The cup  
Jo. xviii. 11. which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?"

What wonder that discourse like this stirred the hearers' hearts and excited discussion? Assuredly He was no ordinary personage; and some suggested that He was the Prophet who, according to Jewish expectation, would appear on the eve of the Messiah's advent to prepare the nation to receive Him. Others went farther. "This," they said, "is the Messiah." Here others demurred: "Why, does the Messiah come from Galilee? Did not the Scripture say that it is  
Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4; Mic. v. 2. from 'the seed of David' and 'from Bethlehem,' the village where David was, that the Messiah comes?" In truth their demur was the crowning testimony. For what did it mean? It meant that in their judgment the evidence of His Messiahship was complete save only in this—that He was, as they supposed, a Galilean, and the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. They did not know that He had indeed been born in Bethlehem, and had they known it, their doubt would have vanished and they would gladly have acknowledged Him.

There were others who bore their testimony. In the crowd which surrounded Him and listened to His discourse were the officers of the Sanhedrin watching their opportunity to arrest Him and convey Him before the high court which was even then convened. In view of the popular sentiment they durst not execute their commission ; nor indeed were they minded to meddle with Him, since their own hearts were touched. They returned to the court without their prisoner, and when it was demanded of them why they had not brought Him, they answered : “ Never did man so speak.” It was the Pharisees, as the guardians of orthodoxy, who took the lead in His prosecution ; and they indignantly upbraided the officers. “ Have you too been led astray ? ” they cried, denouncing it as intolerable insubordination that they should thus disregard their superiors’ mandate and, flouting the judgment of the Doctors of the Law, side with the ignorant rabble.

It was an unseemly outburst, unworthy of that august tribunal, and it elicited a protest from one of the councillors—Nicodemus, the old Pharisee who on that memorable night two and half years ago had interviewed our Lord in His retreat on Mount Olivet. What he then heard had lodged in his heart, and he was already a believer though he had not yet ventured to confess his faith. To confess it now in face of his angry colleagues required more courage than he possessed, but he could not hold his peace. He timidly raised a question of order. A criminal, he pointed out, was entitled to a fair trial and must not be condemned unheard. “ Does our law judge the man without first hearing him and ascertaining his offence ? ” His



protest was unavailing. It merely exposed him to insult. "Are you too from Galilee?" they sneered. With the Judæans, so proud of their Holy City, their Temple, their schools, and all their hallowed traditions, Galilee was a byword for boorish ignorance. A prophet from Galilee, forsooth! The very idea was preposterous. "Search, and see that from Galilee no prophet arises."

It was on the last day of the Feast that these things happened, and next day the strangers took their departure and the city resumed its normal quietude. Our Lord remained; for it was not the Feast that had brought Him thither. He had come to make a last appeal to the citizens and their rulers, and now He addresses Himself to this task. It has already appeared how difficult it was. Jerusalem was the sacred capital, the seat of the Temple and the home of Rabbinism; and it swarmed with Priests and Doctors of the Law who maintained a jealous observance of Him, eager for a pretext to arraign Him. He found always a ready audience in the outer court of the Temple, that place of common resort, and there were always Pharisees and Sadducees standing by as He discoursed, listening critically and at every opportunity interposing some objection, some captious question, in the hope of putting Him to confusion and so discrediting Him with the populace.

One evening He was teaching "at the Treasury"—the thirteen boxes, "the Trumpets" as they were called from their shape, which stood in the sacred court for the reception of the worshippers' contributions. It was now the month of October when the days were shortening, and

Cf. Mk. xii.

41; Lk.

xxi. 1.

after His wont, as the shadows fell and the lamps were kindled, He found there a parable. "The Light" was a Jewish name for the Messiah. "I," said He, "am the Light of the world. One who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness but will have the light of life."

Here the Pharisees interposed, quoting the legal maxim that a litigant's deposition is no evidence. "You are testifying of yourself. Your testimony is not true." It was a poor quibble, and how did He meet it? First He told them that it was not a matter of legal evidence at all. He was declaring the tidings which He had brought from the Unseen, that world whence He had come and whither He would soon return. And even as evidence, He added, it was valid. For was there not another legal maxim: "At the mouth of two witnesses shall a matter be established"? and His claim had His Father's corroboration. He meant that His claim was divinely attested by His miracles and the Scriptures; but they did not understand. "Where," they asked, "is your father?" challenging Him to produce His witness. "If," He answered, "you had known Me, you would have known My Father too." He was the Eternal Son of God Incarnate, the Visible Image of the Invisible Father; and to know Him was to know the Father, to know the Father was to acknowledge Him.

Another day, pleading with them to accept His message ere their opportunity passed, He said: "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come." His appeal was greeted by the rulers in the audience with

derision. "Will he kill himself?" cried one. They had called Him mad, and now this ribald scoffer suggests that He meant to do away with Himself and go to that darkest Hades whither the Rabbinical theology relegated the souls of suicides. "Will he kill himself? That is why he says: 'Where I am going you cannot come.'" It was a coarse gibe, and He scornfully rebuked it. With men who could talk so He had nothing in common: they belonged to different worlds of thought and feeling. "You," they retorted—"who are you?" and in utter disgust He exclaimed: "O why am I talking to you at all!"<sup>1</sup> They were hopeless. It was useless to reason with them, but by and by they would recognise, too late, the justice of His claims.

It was a painful encounter, yet good came of it. With that instinct of fairness which always animates a popular assemblage the audience sided with our Lord, and "many," says the Evangelist, "believed in Him," meaning that they gave their hearts to Him and confessed themselves His disciples. And more than that: there were some of the rulers who were impressed. They did not "believe in Him" but, says the Evangelist, tersely defining their attitude, they "believed Him," meaning, in accordance with the Greek usage, that they recognised the truth of His teaching and were disposed to acknowledge His claims. Ashamed of their colleagues' ribaldry they presently sought an interview with Him, and He readily granted their request. Where was the scene of the interview? It was within the Temple precincts, but since they would desire privacy, it would hardly be the outer court where the

<sup>1</sup> The proper rendering of a much disputed phrase (Jo. viii. 25).

people congregated. The magnificent pile, begun by King Herod some forty-eight years previously, was still incomplete; and it would appear from the sequel that they met Him in some quarter, <sup>Cf. Jo. ii. 20.</sup> barricaded from general access, where building operations were in progress and fragments of masonry littered the pavement. There after <sup>Cf. viii. 59.</sup> working hours they would find seclusion.

The conference began fairly, but it was difficult to reason with minds so obsessed by prejudice, and presently they took offence. "If," He had said, "you continue in My Word, you will be truly My disciples; and you will learn the truth, and the truth will make you free"; and in their unspiritual fashion they fancied it a reference to their national bondage. "We are the seed of Abraham," they exclaimed resentfully, "and have never been enslaved to any." He quietly explained that it was not national but spiritual freedom that He meant, liberation not from the Roman yoke but from the tyranny of sin. "I know," said He, "that you are the seed of Abraham; but," He added, surveying their angry faces, "you are seeking to kill Me." And the reason of their enmity was that His message had no place in their hearts—the message which he had brought them from Heaven. "What I have seen with the Father I am telling: do you then what you have heard from the Father." Here again they missed His reference, not understanding that by "the Father" He meant God. "Our father," said they, "is Abraham." "If," He retorted, "you are Abraham's children, do the works of Abraham. As it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth—the truth which I heard from God.

This is not what Abraham did. Do you the works of your father." "We are no bastard breed," they blustered. "We have one Father—God."

This was a larger claim, and it exposed them to a crushing rejoinder. He had allowed their claim to be children of Abraham, since their descent from the patriarch, the father of their race, was a physical fact. His blood was in their veins, and though they lacked his spirit, they were none the less his seed. But divine sonship was a spiritual relationship, proved by spiritual sympathy; and this they lacked. "If God had been your Father, you would have loved Me; for I came forth from God." Since it is spiritual sympathy that determines spiritual kinship, they were rather children of the Devil; for it was his spirit that animated them in rejecting the truth which the Lord proclaimed and seeking to kill Him.

This enraged them. "Say we not well that you are a Samaritan and are mad?" With the Rabbis in their pride of learning "a Samaritan" was an opprobrious epithet for an ignorant boor; and to call Him a Samaritan and a madman was the utmost of vituperation. "I am not mad," He replied. "No, I honour My Father, and you dishonour Me." In insulting Him it was God that they were insulting, and God would vindicate His honour. They little dreamed what they were losing. "Verily, verily I tell you, if one keep My Word, he shall never behold death." "Now," they cried, "we are sure that you are mad. Abraham died, and the Prophets; and you say 'If one keep My Word, he shall never taste of death'! Are you greater than our father Abraham and the Prophets? Whom do you make yourself?"

He answered that the question was not whom He made Himself but who He was on the testimony of God—that God whom they claimed as their own. And on God's testimony He was the Promised Saviour. "Your father Abraham exulted in the hope of seeing My day; and he has seen it and rejoiced." What could He mean? They scanned Him. He was only three and thirty years of age, but His burden had prematurely aged the Man of Sorrows and He looked full ten years older. "You are not yet," said they, "fifty years of age, and have you seen Abraham?" "Verily, verily," He replied, "ere Abraham was born have I been." This was more than madness: it was blasphemy, and they turned to snatch up fragments of masonry to stone Him to death. But meanwhile He had stolen away and was gone.

The days sped by till two months had elapsed and it was near the Feast of Dedication, which fell on the 25th of the month Chislev (December). It <sup>2 Macc. x</sup> was a busy time with our Lord; for those <sup>1-8.</sup> controversies in the Temple-court were in no wise His sole employment. He would be engaged all the while in private converse with His disciples, not only the Twelve but His newly won converts who, imbued as they were with Rabbinical lore, had much need of instruction in the ideals of His Kingdom. One Sabbath Day with some of these in His company He was on His way to the Temple. As still in Roman Catholic countries where poverty abounds the approaches to the cathedrals are beset by <sup>Cf. Ac. iii</sup> mendicants appealing to the worshippers for <sup>1, 2.</sup> alms, so was it in Jerusalem of old; and as they approached the sacred gateway, one suppliant particularly



arrested their attention. He was a young man but he was blind, and as a fellow-citizen and an *habitué* of the spot they knew him well. Not merely was he blind but he had been born blind—a circumstance which presented a problem to their minds, since, as we have seen, it was a Jewish doctrine that suffering was always penal. Had he once had sight, they would have accounted his blindness a judicial visitation; but he had been born blind, and in such Cf. Ex. xx. a case two explanations were feasible: either, 5; Lam. v. 7; Ezk. xviii. 2. according to the law of heredity, he was suffering for the sins of his parents or, according to the ancient theory of the pre-existence of the soul, he was suffering for sins which he had himself committed in a previous state. They had often debated the question, and now they submit it to the Master. "Rabbi," said they, "who sinned—this man or his parents—that he should be born blind?"

The Lord rejected both alternatives, and told them that there was a deeper reason in human suffering than was dreamed of in their theology—the gracious operation of a providential purpose. The man had been born blind "that the works of God might be manifested in him." Their shallow theologising was not merely foolish but unfeeling. Why should they vex a sufferer by crude speculation imputing undeserved blame? Better surely leave the mystery unsolved and minister to his sore need. "We should work Cf. Jo. viii. 12. God's works while it is day. Soon comes night when none can work." Sooner than they thought was it coming—the dark night when He, "the Light of the world," would be gone.

Therewith He addressed Himself to His task. A

word would have given the man sight, but in view of the bitterness of the rulers' enmity and their recent attempts upon His life He would not by working the miracle so quietly expose Himself to their evasions and misrepresentations. He would make it an open issue, enlisting the popular sympathy. And therefore He set about it in a picturesque and appealing fashion. As we have seen, it was believed in those days that saliva was medicinal, and a plaster of saliva and clay was credited with healing efficacy. So He spat upon the ground and smeared the sightless eyes with the moistened dust. The bystanders witnessed His procedure, but He would gain a larger publicity and He bade the man go and wash his eyes in the Pool of Siloam, situated just within the city wall on the south-eastern side. Some of the bystanders would escort him thither, and the sight of him passing along the streets with his smeared eyes would excite general curiosity, which passed into wonderment when on reaching the Pool and laving his eyes he got his sight.

He hied him home, and his neighbours gathered round him in amazement. They could hardly believe that it was indeed himself and not some one resembling him till he assured them of his identity. "Then how were your eyes opened?" they asked, and he explained: "The man who is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and bade me 'Away to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and got my sight." This alarmed them. Jesus was proscribed by the rulers, and a decree had lately been issued that any one acknowledging His Messiahship would be excommunicated. It was dangerous to have to do with Him, and since there was no foreseeing what might come of

this business, it would be prudent for them to report it and thus clear themselves of complicity. "Where is he?" they demanded; and when, aware of their purpose, he answered, "I do not know," they dragged him before the rulers of their synagogue.

Those dignitaries took up the case. "How did you get your sight?" they inquired, and on hearing the story they consulted together. Some of them pronounced it a violation of the Sabbath, while others represented that one who wrought such miracles could hardly be a sinner; and so they asked the man what he thought of Jesus. "He is a prophet" was the stout reply. His brusquerie offended them, and it occurred to them that he might be an impostor. So they had him removed and, summoning his parents, examined them. "Is this your son?" they asked. "Yes," was the reply. "Was he born blind?" "Yes." "How then has he now his sight?" This was a dangerous question, and they declined to compromise themselves. "That we do not know. Ask him. He is of age; he will tell his own story."

Their reticence confirmed the Rabbis' suspicion, and they recalled the lad and, as though they had ascertained his imposture during his absence, sternly called upon him to acknowledge the truth. "Give Cf. Josh. vii. 19. glory to God," they said (meaning "make full confession"). "We know that this fellow is a sinner." "Whether he is a sinner I do not know," was the answer; "one thing I do know—that I was blind and now I have sight." It was a severe checkmate. "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" they feebly inquired, exposing themselves to a yet sharper thrust: "I told you already:

why do you wish to hear it again? Do you wish to become his disciples too?" This was too galling, and they resorted to abuse—that refuge of dull wits: "You are his disciple: we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but this fellow—no one knows whence he is." "Why," cried their nimble-witted adversary, pretending astonishment at a confession of ignorance on the part of those wise teachers, "herein is the marvellous thing—that you do not know whence he is, and he has opened my eyes!" Then with superb impudence he read them a homily: "We know that God does not hearken to sinners; but if any one be devout and do His will, to him He hearkens. From eternity it has not been heard that any one has opened the eyes of one born blind. If 'this fellow' had not been from God, he could have done nothing."

It was intolerable. "You were wholly born in sins," they raged, "and you teach us!" And they forthwith excommunicated him.

Our Lord had not done with the blind beggar when He smeared his eyes and sent him to the Pool of Siloam. He kept Himself acquainted with what befell thereafter; and on hearing of his excommunication He visited the poor quarter of the city where he dwelt and sought him out. "Do you believe," said He, "in the Son of Man?" Though not the first time he had met the Lord, it was the first time he had ever seen Him, and he did not recognise Him. "And who is He, sir?" he asked. "Tell me, that I may believe in Him." "You have seen Him," was the answer: "it is He that is talking with you." Then it dawned upon the man that he was face to face with his Benefactor, and he bowed before Him.

It was truly strange that, while He was rejected by the wise men, "the teachers of Israel," a poor darkened cf. Jo. iii. soul should thus be brought to a knowledge 17, viii. of His grace. Though, as He so often de- 15, 16, xii. clared, He had not come to judge but to save 47. men, yet His very presence in their midst was a searching tribunal, and by their attitude toward Him they passed judgment upon themselves. He felt the solemnity of it. "It was," He exclaimed, "for judgment that I came into this world, that the sightless may see and the seeing become blind!" A crowd had gathered round Him, and among them were some of the Rabbis jealously observing His dealing with the victim of their ecclesiastical censure. They took His words home to themselves. "Are we, too, blind?" they angrily demanded. Ah, just there lay their guilt. They sinned with open eyes. They knew the Scripture, and in face of its testimony they denied His claims. "If you had been blind, you would have had no sin. As it is, you say 'We see': your sin remains."

Then, turning to the crowd, He made the incident which had happened in their midst the theme of a gracious discourse. The Scriptures of old loved to speak of God as the Shepherd of His people, and His people as the sheep of His pasture. And His priests and prophets, whom He ordained to care for the souls of their fellow-men, they called shepherds too. There is no more gracious ideal of the sacred office of the ministry, and none which appealed so movingly to the Jewish heart. For the relation betwixt a Jewish shepherd and his flock was peculiarly

Cf. Pss.

xxiii,

lxxiv. 1,

lxxx. 1,

c. 3.

Num.

xxvii. 16,

17; Ezk.

xxxiv;

Zech. xi. 3,

17, xiii. 7.

tender. In the springtime the shepherds led their flocks out to the Wilderness of Judæa, and there on the lone moorlands where David once tended his father Jesse's sheep, they tended them all the long summer, leading them forth in the morning to the green pastures by the still waters and gathering them at nightfall in the fold. In the wide solitude his sheep were the shepherd's sole companions, and betwixt him and them grew up an affectionate intimacy. He knew them all, and he had a name for each, and they would answer to his call. He did not need to drive them. Of a morning when he would take them out to pasture, he stood by the gate of the common fold and "called his own sheep by name, and led them forth." He did not need to drive them. "He goes in front of them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. But a stranger will they not follow but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

The Lord sketched this idyllic picture, and then He interpreted the parable to the listening crowd. By their office the Rabbis who had dealt so heartlessly with that poor soul were shepherds of the people; but were they true shepherds? Were they not liker the robbers who broke into the fold and made the flock their prey? or at the best like the mere hirelings who thought only of their wage and cared nothing for the sheep? "I," said the Lord, "am the Good Shepherd" or, as the word rather signifies, "the True Shepherd," the Shepherd who realises the ideal of shepherdhood. And what is the supreme mark of the True Shepherd? Shepherding was a perilous business; for a shepherd had oftentimes to risk his life, now in desperate encounters

Cf. 1 Sam.  
xvii. 34-37;  
Am. iii. 12.



with savage beasts or robbers, and again in rescuing a lamb swept away by the rushing torrent or seeking  
 Cf. Mt. a wanderer among the mountain crags. A  
 xviii. 12, mere hireling would leave the creature to  
 13; Lk. perish. "An hireling who is no shepherd  
 xv. 3-6. nor the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and he leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches and scatters them. The reason is that he is an hireling and does not care for the sheep." The mark of a true shepherd is this—that "he lays down his life for the sheep." "I," said the Lord, "am the True Shepherd"; and the proof was that He was facing the malice of His enemies, and would presently lay down His life, a willing sacrifice, for His sheep—  
 Cf. Lk. xii. not merely the little flock which had already  
 32. heard His voice and followed Him, but all the others whom He would yet win and gather into His fold at last.

Even the Rabbis were moved, and they talked it over with their colleagues. "He is mad!" said one. "Why do you listen to him?" And this was the general opinion. But there were some who thought otherwise. "These," said they, "are not the words of a madman; and can a madman open blind men's eyes?" Thus divided in opinion, they determined to interview Him, and they sought Him—where they were sure to find Him—in the Temple. It was now  
 Cf. 1 Macc. the Feast of Dedication, the annual com-  
 iv. 52-59; memoration of the purification of the Temple  
 2 Macc. x. by Judas Maccabæus after its pollution by  
 1-8. Antiochus Epiphanes; and since the solemnity began on 25th Chislev (December) and lasted eight days, it was midwinter, and they found the Lord not in the

open court but in the shelter of the eastern cloister, known as Solomon's Cloister because it was the sole portion of the ancient Temple which had escaped destruction at the hands of the Assyrian conqueror. Some of them were honestly perplexed, but most of them were hostile and came in the hope of putting Him in the wrong and finding a pretext for taking action against Him. "How long," they brusquely demanded, "do you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

Wherefore should He tell them? He had told them already, and had attested His claim by the works which He had done in His Father's name; yet they did not believe. And, He adds, reverting to the parable which He had so shortly before spoken in their hearing, and looking round on the little flock of His disciples including His latest convert whom they had so heartlessly banished from their communion, the reason was that they were no sheep of His; else they would have hearkened to His voice and followed Him. His sheep were safe in His keeping. "No one shall snatch them out of My hand." What could it seem to those rulers but very madness that He should thus defy their authority? Marking the sneer on their faces, He added: "My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

This was worse than madness: it was blasphemy, and it inflamed their fanaticism. Had there been missiles at hand, they would forthwith have pelted Him to death; but there were no loose stones on the pavement of the Cloister. They bethought themselves

of the litter of masonry hard by, and rushing thither they, says the Evangelist, " fetched stones that they might stone Him." Even so brief a delay Jo. x. 31. afforded time for reflection, and on regaining the Cloister they hesitated. " Many works have I shown you," said He, " good works of the Father's doing : for which of them are you stoning Me ? " " It is not for a good work," they answered, " that we are stoning you, but for blasphemy and because you, being a man, make yourself God." To reason with them of His high claim would have been waste of breath and further provocation, and the Lord put them to silence by an appeal to Scripture. In the eyes of the Israelites

Ps. lxxxii;  
cf. Ex. xxi.  
6, xxii. 8,  
28; Ps.  
lviii. 1  
R.V.  
marg. of old, justice was so sacred that they designated its ministers " gods." " Ye are gods : how long will ye judge unjustly ? " is the Psalmist's rebuke of unrighteous judges. Hence argued our Lord : if the Scripture called judges, even unjust judges, " gods " in virtue of their sacred office, was it blasphemy in Him, whom the Father had sanctified and commissioned to the world, to say " I am God's Son " ? His works were His justification ; for they were works of God, and if they proved no more, they proved His divine commission. " If I am not doing the works of My Father, do not believe Me ; but if I am, then, even though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may be sure and ever surer that the Father is in Me and I in the Father."

Of course it was not on our Lord's part a serious argument ; for it was not thus that He handled the Scriptures. But it was precisely thus that the Rabbis handled them, and on their mode of exegesis the logic

of the argument was irresistible. They durst not now stone Him as a blasphemer, yet they were loath that He should escape. They made to arrest Him, but He evaded them and withdrew. In face of the implacable hostility of the rulers and their repeated attempts upon His life He would continue no longer in Jerusalem, since He still had work to do and He would not have His ministry brought to a premature conclusion. So He quitted the city and retired to Bethabara, the first scene of the Baptist's preaching. It was for our Lord a place of hallowed memory ; for it was there that He had been called almost three years ago to begin the ministry which was now so near completion, and there He would await the call to His supreme Sacrifice.

He left Jerusalem with His little band of disciples and, crossing the Kidron Valley, climbed the slope of Mount Olivet. On reaching the summit He paused and looked back on the city which He had so earnestly sought to win and which had rejected the overtures of His grace. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," He cried, "that killeth the prophets and stoneth those sent to her ! How often would I have gathered thy children even as a bird gathers her brood under her wings ! and ye would not. Behold, ' your Jer. xxii. house is left you desolate.' For I tell you, <sup>5.</sup> Ps. cxviii. ye shall never more see Me until you say : <sup>26.</sup>

' Blessed be He who cometh in the name of the Lord.' "

Yes, there was still hope for Jerusalem ; for the Lord would address to her yet another, His final and supremely solemn, appeal. And even now His labour had not been in vain. Rejected by the rulers, His grace had found an entrance into lowly souls. And it had been so ordained. It was His Father's work that

He had been doing, and whatsoever had befallen Him was His Father's will, and the issue was safe in His Father's hands. "I praise Thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that Thou hast hidden these things from wise men and shrewd and hast revealed them to babes ; yes, Father, that so it was well pleasing in Thy sight. All has been committed to Me by My Father ; and none recognises the Son but the Father, nor does any recognise the Father but the Son and him to whom it is the Son's will to reveal Him."

Therewith He took His way down the Ascent of Blood.

## AT BETHABARA

Jo. x. 41, 42. Mt. xix. 16-xx. 16; Mk. x. 1-31;  
Lk. xviii. 15-30 (xvii. 7-10).

It was not to rest that the Lord went to Bethabara but rather to prosecute His ministry more freely. His going thither was known to the people of Jerusalem, and they trooped down after Him, eager, as Cf. Mk. xii. the common folk always were, to hear His <sup>37</sup> gracious message. Nor were they disappointed. Unembarrassed by the enmity of the rulers, He preached to the multitude and healed their sicknesses, and many were won to faith. It was a great ministry, and it made a great impression. Naturally the people recalled the Baptist's ministry there three years before and the testimony which he had borne to Jesus; and they recognised how far it was transcended by the wonders which they were now witnessing. "John," said they, "wrought no sign, but everything which John said of this man was true."

Even at Bethabara, however, the Lord was not unmolested. Tidings of His ministry there reached the ears of the rulers at Jerusalem, and a company of Pharisees appeared on the scene. Their purpose was to engage Him in controversy in the hope of puzzling Him and so discrediting Him with the people. They approached Him and propounded a question: "Is it allowable to put away one's wife 'for any reason'?" It was a quotation from their law of divorce which, as



we have seen, bore very hardly upon women, permitting a husband to put away his wife "for any reason"—if she were a bad cook, if he disliked her, or even if he fancied another woman more. It is remarkable how highly the Jews of that period valued this facility in dissolving the marriage tie, one Rabbi claiming it as a special privilege granted to the Israelites and denied to the Gentiles. Interference with it would be keenly resented; and those Pharisees, aware how strenuously our Lord, ever the champion of the oppressed, had protested against it, were sure that He would condemn it now and thus alienate the popular sympathy.

He recognised their purpose and skilfully frustrated it. "Have you not read," He answered, with fine irony charging those Rabbis with ignorance of the Scriptures which they professed to interpret, "that the Creator originally 'made them male and female' and said 'Therefore will a man leave his father and mother, and the twain will be one flesh'?" Here is the divine ideal of marriage. It is an ordinance of the Creator for the fulfilment of His creative design, and its desecration is therefore a violation at once of the divine and the natural order. That was the primal *raison d'être* of marriage, and it was a sufficient answer to the Pharisees' question and a heavy condemnation of their practice.

They durst not challenge His answer, since that were to challenge Scripture; but they fell back upon the fact that the Law of Moses conflicted with the primal ordinance inasmuch as it sanctioned divorce. "Why then," said they, "did Moses command 'Give a bill of divorcement and put her away'?"

Their hope was that He would censure that law of Moses and thus expose Himself to a charge of heresy. And what was His answer? He justified that later enactment as a concession on the part of Moses to the weakness of his contemporaries. It is told of the Athenian legislator Solon that he once said of his laws that they were not the best he could have given but they were the best the Athenians could receive. And even so was that law of Moses a concession to the unspirituality of a generation incapable of attaining to a lofty ideal. "Moses in view of the hardness of your hearts permitted you to put away your wives, but this is not the original ordinance." It was not "allowable to put away one's wife 'for any reason.' " "I tell you that whoever puts away his wife save for unfaithfulness and marries another, commits adultery." That is the only valid reason for divorce; and it is valid inasmuch as unfaithfulness annuls the marriage-contract, and in that case divorce is merely the recognition of a *fait accompli*.

His verdict was unchallengeable, yet even the Twelve were discomfited by the enunciation of an ideal so exacting and so alien from the common practice; and when they got home to their lodging, they somewhat petulantly remonstrated with Him. "If," said they, "this be the only reason for a man dealing with his wife, it is not expedient to marry." "It is not every one," He answered, "that can receive this saying, but only such as have the gift." He meant that saying of theirs about the expediency of celibacy, and He proceeded to explain that the religious value of celibacy lay in the motive which prompted it. There was no religious value where a man was unfitted for marriage

whether congenitally or by misadventure ; but there was value in it where, like St. Paul, one voluntarily Cf. I Cor. vii. 32-35. denied himself that he might the more fully devote himself to the service of the Kingdom of Heaven. " One," concludes our Lord, " who can receive it, let him receive it " ; and the epigram was a sufficient answer to their petulant remonstrance. If they shrank from the trials which matrimony might bring, then indeed it was not expedient for them to marry ; but in such celibacy there was nothing meritorious, nothing pleasing to God.

The mischief of the Rabbinical marriage-law was not merely its injustice to womankind but its desecration of the home. " It is a small matter to have our palaces set aflame compared with the misery of having our sense of a noble womanhood, which is the inspiration of a purifying shame, the promise of life-penetrating affection, stained and blotted out." The degradation of woman is a wrong to her children, and in our Lord's eyes a child was a sacred thing. Was it a recognition of the lesson which He had taught by His protest against that evil law that presently brought to Him a company of parents, fathers and mothers both ? They had their children with them, some of these babes in their mothers' arms ; and when the Evangelists say that they " brought " them, they employ a sacred word, signifying that they " presented " them to Him like an offering. They brought their children to Him that He might bless them. The disciples encountered them, and they resented the intrusion and would have turned them away had not the Master observed what they were about. " Let the children come to Me," He cried, " and do not keep them back ; for of such is the King-

dom of Heaven." He bade them kindly welcome, and took the little things in His arms and laid His hands on them and blessed them.

As we have seen, not a few of the rulers had been impressed by our Lord's ministry at Jerusalem. It does not indeed appear that any Sadducee was ever moved by His message, but it was natural that it should appeal to the Pharisees. For Pharisaism was the Puritanism of that day, and despite its grievous faults of intolerance, formalism, and hypocrisy it comprehended all that was best and most that was godly in the national life. It was in its essence nothing else than a quest after reconciliation with God. "How can a man be just before God?" is the ancient and abiding question of the human soul; and Job ix. 2. the answer of Pharisaism was: "By keeping His commandments." This sufficed unspiritual souls, but such as, like Saul of Tarsus, "knew the plague of their own hearts" it left unsatisfied. When they had kept all the commandments, they realised that something was yet lacking; and then they redoubled their zeal, seeking what more they might do in the way of legal observance and works of righteousness and earning themselves the derisive appellation of the "Tell-me-what-I-must-do-and-I-will-do-it Pharisees."

To such our Lord's Gospel appealed, telling as it did of peace with God and the blessed hope of eternal life. They would fain have approached Him and taken counsel with Him, but they feared the displeasure of their colleagues. Now, however, that He had left the city and was prosecuting His ministry at Bethabara, they might resort thither and wait upon Him unobserved; and one day as He was leaving His lodging

with the Twelve, He espied a stranger travelling down the highway from Jerusalem. He was a young Pharisee who had listened to Him in the Temple-court and heard of His doings among the people, and had come in quest of Him in the hope of learning from His lips the blessed secret. He ran toward Him and knelt before Him. "Good Teacher," he asked, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

"Teacher" or "Rabbi" was the designation of the wise doctors of the Law, and so reverential was it that it always stood alone, needing no enhancement. In styling our Lord "Teacher" His visitor paid Him abundant honour, but he addressed Him as "good Teacher," confessing Him more than a Rabbi. "Why," asked Jesus, "do you call Me 'good'?" No one is good but God alone." It was not a rebuke; it was a challenge. "Consider what your language implies: do you really mean it?"

Then He answered the question. "If you would enter into life, keep the commandments." All his days the young man had been keeping the commandments so far as he knew them. "What commandments?" he asked, hoping to learn of some further observances, some hitherto untried way of obedience. "Tell me what I must do, and I will do it." The Lord repeated the second table of the Decalogue, those five commandments which define our duty toward our fellow-men, adding that other which comprehends them all: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Ex. xx.  
12-16.

Lev. xix.  
18.

It was a cruel disappointment to the eager seeker. It seemed as though he were being thrust back upon the old weary path. "Teacher," he cried, "all this I have



observed ever since my youth. What is it that I still lack ? ” His distress touched the Lord’s heart, and it is written that “ He looked upon him and loved him,” signifying that, after the fashion of a Rabbi when a disciple pleased him, He kissed the young man’s forehead. “ There is one thing that you lack,” said He. “ If you would attain your end, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven ; and come, follow Me.”

What did He mean ? It is told of a Nitrian monk in the fourth century that his sole possession was a copy of the Gospel, and on reading these words he sold it and gave the price to feed the poor. It was indeed an act of generous devotion ; nevertheless it was a mis-construction of the sacred precept. For here our Lord is not formulating a universal rule. The principle is that whatever there may be in a man’s life that is dearer to him than his soul’s salvation, this he must sacrifice. It is not the same thing with all. With one it is an impure passion, with another worldly ambition, with another pride, with another cowardice ; and the requirement is that whatever it may be that binds a man to earth, that fetter he must break. The young ruler was rich. His wealth was the one thing which held him back from a full consecration, and the Lord demanded its surrender. “ Resign your possessions,” He said, “ and, heedless of shame and suffering, cast in your lot with Me.” “ That man,” says Richard Baxter, “ who has anything in the world so dear to him, that he cannot spare it for Christ, if He call for it, is no true Christian.” The young ruler had thought that he cared supremely for eternal life ; but the Lord showed him that there was something for which he cared



more. "His face fell, and he went away grieved; for he had much property."

The Lord surveyed the retreating form, and then He looked round on His disciples. "With what difficulty," said He, "will those who have wealth enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!" It was a surprising and indeed discomfiting pronouncement for the Twelve, since they were dreaming of an earthly kingdom and a rich requital of their devotion. Marking their astonishment, He reiterated it with stronger emphasis: "Children, how difficult it is to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven! It is easier for a cable<sup>1</sup> to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." It seemed to them the destruction of their golden hope. "Who then," they murmured to one another, "can be saved?" He looked in their troubled faces with His kindly eyes and bade them trust God for the fulfilment of their hopes. "With Gen. xviii. men it is impossible, but not with God; for 14. 'everything is possible with God.'"

Still they were disquieted, wondering if all their sacrifices were to go for nothing; and presently Peter appealed to Him, voicing their misgivings. "Look you," said he, pointing the contrast between their response to His call and *il gran rifiuto* of that young Pharisee, "we left everything and have followed you: what then are we to have?" It was indeed an ignoble spirit that inspired the question—the spirit which serves God for the hope of reward and not for the joy of serving and in glad requital of His unmerited grace;

<sup>1</sup> *Camēlos*, "camel," in the original text here stands for *camīlos*, "a thick rope"—an example of *itacism*, that confusion of vowels so common in Greek MSS. by reason of similarity of pronunciation.

and already on another occasion He had reproved it. "Which of you is there," He had said, "that has a slave ploughing or shepherding, who will say Lk. xvii. 7-10. to him on his coming in from the field: 'Come along at once and take your place at table'? Nay, will he not say to him: 'Get ready my supper, and gird yourself and wait upon me till I have eaten and drunk; and afterwards you will eat and drink'? Is he grateful to the slave for doing his bidding? So too with you: when you have done everything that you are bidden, say: 'We are unprofitable slaves. Only what was our duty have we done.' " It is not thus indeed that God treats His servants; but it is thus that we should serve Him, recognising how much we owe Him and counting the utmost we can do too small a requital. And the Lord might now have answered His disciples thus. But their discomfiture touched His heart, and He answered them very gently. He assured them that no sacrifice for His sake and the Gospel's will miss its reward. Here and hereafter it will be richly recompensed. "But," He added, "many will be first that are last, and last that are first"; and then He explained the epigram by a parable, showing that what counts with God is not the service that we render but the spirit which prompts it, not our sacrifices but the love which they express.

Early one morning a prosperous vine-dresser went to the market-place to hire workers. Those were hard times, and the market-place was thronged with men desirous of employment. He got as many as he required at the rate of a shilling for the day—the ordinary day's wage at that period; and they started work at 6 o'clock. It had vexed him to see so many men in

want of work, and at 9 o'clock he returned to the market-place and hired some more, promising to pay them fairly at the end of the day. He did the like at noon, and again at 3 o'clock. At 5 o'clock he found a group still idle—poor, dejected creatures whom no one would employ—and in sheer pity he hired them too. Glad of work on any terms, if only for a single hour, they hurried off to the vineyard.

Six o'clock—the “loosing-time”—came, and the workers presented themselves at the pay-office. The master was there, and, enjoying the humour of the situation, he had directed his steward to call them forward in the reverse order of their hiring, the 5 o'clock men first, and pay them all the full day's wage. The early men saw the late-comers getting each his shilling, and they reckoned on getting more; but when their turn came, they got just what they had bargained for. They all grumbled, and one of them spoke out. He looked at his shilling on the counter and, letting it lie, turned to the master. “These last-comers,” he protested indignantly, “have put in only a single hour, and you have put them on an equality with us who have borne the day's toil and sweat!” “Mate,” answered the master, “I am doing you no injustice. Did you not agree with me for a shilling? Take up your pay and begone. May I not do what I will with my own?”

Surely he might. A bargain is a bargain. The first-comers had agreed to do the day's work for a fair day's wage, and they got what they had bargained for. They would indeed have had a grievance had the master offered them less; but he paid them their due, and it **was** nothing to them that, out of pure compassion, he

paid the late-comers more than they had earned. It was his own money, and he had a right to be generous with it.

The parable was a rebuke of the mercenary spirit which animated the Twelve and which they had expressed in their question: "What then are we to have?" God would have His workers serve Him with no thought of recompense, not like those first-comers, mere hirelings, who made their bargain ere they started work, but rather like the others who obeyed the master's bidding, leaving their requital to him, especially "these last" who, conscious of their unworthiness, fell to work with never a thought of requital, thankful that he had regarded them and trusting in his generosity. **God's servants are not hirelings but His fellow-workers.**

## THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

Jo. xi. 1-53.

WHEN our Lord left Jerusalem, a fugitive from the rage of her rulers, there was sorrow in His heart, and as He looked back upon her from the crest of Olivet, a lamentation broke from His lips. For He knew that she was doomed. Her people were dreaming of a King who should arise and emancipate them from the heathen tyrant, and there could be but one issue of their continual turbulence breaking out ever and anon in wild insurrection. Rome would ere long lose patience and quell the commotion with a strong hand. So it came to pass in the year 70, when the Holy City was stormed by Titus and her people scattered. It was her fond dream of the Messianic Kingdom as a kingdom of this world that was working her ruin, and her only hope lay in recognising the Messiahship of our Lord and owning His gracious dominion. He had made His appeal to her, and her rulers had rejected Him and driven Him away. But still His heart yearned over her, and all the while of His sojourn at Bethabara He was <sup>cf. Jo. xi. 41, 42.</sup> hoping and praying that God would grant Him yet another opportunity of appealing to her and peradventure winning her ere it was too late.

And His desire was granted. A message reached Him from His friends at Bethany, the sisters Martha and Mary, telling Him that their brother Lazarus, so dear to them and to Him, was very ill. Here He

recognised His opportunity. "This illness," said He to His disciples, "is not to end in death but to serve the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." They supposed that He had reason for making light of it, all the more that He apparently dismissed it from His thoughts. Two days passed, and next morning to their astonishment He said to them: "Let us go back to Judæa." They could not conceive His errand, supposing that all was well at Bethany. "Rabbi," they exclaimed, "it is but now that the Jews were seeking to stone you, and are you going away back there?" "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" He answered in proverbial phrase, meaning, as Thomas Fuller has it, that "God's children are immortal while their Father has anything for them to do on earth." Then He told them His errand: "Lazarus our friend has fallen asleep: I am going to awake him." They took Him literally. "Lord," they remonstrated, "if he has fallen asleep, he will get well." So He put it plainly: "Lazarus is dead; and on your account, that you may believe, I rejoice that I was not there. But let us go to him." They demurred and would have held back and perhaps have let Him go alone but for Thomas the Twin, ever prone though he was to see the dark side. His was that true heroism which apprehends the worst yet faces it. "Let us go too," he cried, "that we may die with Him!"

They would reach Bethany toward evening, and since Lazarus had died just after the tidings of his illness had been despatched to Bethabara and had been buried immediately as was neces- Cf. Ac. v.  
6, 10.  
sary in the sultry East, his body had now been four days in the tomb. A Jewish sepulchre was commonly



a cave where the bodies were deposited in niches ; and it sometimes happened that a swoon was mistaken for death and a seeming corpse revived after being laid to rest. Hence the idea had arisen that the soul hovered about its tenement of clay, fain to reanimate it, for three days ; and only then, when corruption set in, did the mourners abandon hope and roll the stone to the mouth of the sepulchre and leave the mortal relics to decay. Lazarus had now been dead four days, and all hope was gone and his sisters were sitting in their desolate home. They were not alone ; for Lazarus had been widely esteemed and " many of the Jews," not only the local Rabbis but others from the neighbouring capital, had gathered to condole with them. But they were inconsolable. " If the Lord had been here," was their ceaseless moan, " our brother would not have died."

While they were mourning thus, the Lord and His disciples were making their way up the Ascent of Blood, and some neighbour espying them hastened to the bereaved home and told Martha of His approach. She hurried off to meet Him, and found Him at the burial-place—the *cemetery* or " sleeping-place," as the primitive Christians so beautifully called it—which, according to the Jewish custom, as we have seen, was situated outside the village. His arrival rekindled hope in her breast. Her brother had indeed been dead four days, yet surely even yet the Lord might restore him. " Lord," she cried, " if you had been here, my brother would not have died ! And now," she added, " whatever you ask of God, God will give you." " Your brother," He answered, " will rise again." She thought He was referring to the final

Resurrection, and this seemed to her poor comfort. It was just the sort of religious commonplace which the Rabbis had been repeating to her and Mary, and her heart was craving for an immediate restoration. "I know it," she answered; "I know that he will rise again at the Resurrection on the Last Day." "I," said the Lord, "am the Resurrection and the Life. One who believes in Me, even if he be dead, will live; and every one who is alive and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" That rekindled her hope. "Yes, Lord," she cried; "I have believed that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour who is coming into the world."

He inquired of her sister, and away she sped and, entering the room where Mary was sitting with the visitors about her, whispered to her: "The Teacher has come and is calling for you." Mary started up and hastened out of doors. "She is away to the sepulchre to weep there" said the visitors, and they followed her, bewailing the dead after the heathenish fashion which prevailed among the Jews in those days and which had so pained the Lord when He Cf. Mk. v. 38, 39. visited the house of Jair. On reaching the burial-place where the Lord was waiting, Mary fell at His feet and repeated the plaint which had been on her lips and Martha's all those sad days: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died!" Ere He could answer the Rabbis and others who had joined their train arrived, and their despairing lamentations, so ill according with His thought of death as a falling asleep to wake in the light of the Father's face, distressed Him beyond endurance. "Where," He cried impatiently, "have you laid him?" The

clamour ceased, and they conducted Him through the cemetery to the cave where Lazarus was lying.

At the moment His resentment of their lamentation would naturally be construed as insensibility, but as they went they observed His eyes aswim with tears. "See," whispered some, "how He loved him!" But not even in that solemn hour could the Rabbis forget their animosity, and some of them sneered. Here was the man so recently supposed to have opened the eyes of one born blind, and all he could now do was to shed unavailing tears! If he had really opened the blind man's eyes, he surely could have prevented the death of Lazarus.

And indeed why should He have wept? This is an old question, and some fifteen centuries ago it was thus answered by that gracious teacher, St. Isidore of Pelusium: "He was about to raise him for His own glory. He wept for him, saying in effect: 'One who has entered within the haven I am calling back to the billows; one who has been crowned I am bringing back to the lists.'"

By the bright waters now thy lot is cast ;  
Joy for thee, happy friend ! thy bark hath past  
The sea's rough foam !  
Now the long yearnings of thy soul are stilled ;  
Home, home ! thy peace is won, thy heart is filled :  
Thou art gone home ! "

He knew what lies behind the Veil, and how well it is with those who have fallen asleep and rest with God. And therefore He wept—not because Lazarus was dead but because He must interrupt his blessed repose.

Thus agitated, He reached the sepulchre. "Remove the stone," He said. "Lord," remonstrated Martha, ever practical, "he is now decomposing; for he has been dead four days." "Did I not tell you," He answered, "that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" The stone was removed and, standing by the open sepulchre, the Lord prayed aloud. In the days of His flesh His supernatural power was a gift of God, and ere working a miracle He was wont to pray; but now His prayer was not a request for heavenly aid. This He had already sought, and His prayer was a thanksgiving for the opportunity vouchsafed Him of attesting His Messiahship and perchance even now winning those men of Jerusalem. "Father, I thank Thee that Thou didst hear Me. I knew that Thou always hearest Me, but for the sake of the multitude that stands by I spoke, that they may believe that Thou didst commission Me." Then in loud, ringing tones He cried: "Lazarus, come forth!" and like one suddenly awaked from sleep Lazarus came forth, swathed in cerements.

It was by the power of God that the miracle was wrought; and why indeed should it be judged a thing incredible that God should raise the dead—  
that the power which fashions the embryo <sup>Ac. xxvi. 8.</sup> in the womb, makes it live, brings the child to birth, and makes him grow in stature and understanding, should reanimate a lifeless form and repair in a moment the wastage of decay? Most truly says St. Augustine, "It is more to create men than to resuscitate them"; and while the greater mystery is continually enacted before us, dare we pronounce it impossible for the Creator, when He will, to perform the lesser marvel?

And what came of the miracle? "Many of the Jews," says the Evangelist, "those, namely, who had come to Mary and beheld the thing which He did, believed in Him." As we have seen, they were Rabbis; and not only had they, like so many of their order, been impressed by the Lord's claims but, being their friends, they would be influenced by the testimony of Lazarus and his sisters. And now their lingering doubt was conquered by the marvel which they had witnessed. Some of them belonged to Jerusalem, and on their return thither they reported to the leaders of their party what had happened at Bethany and confessed their faith in our Lord.

It was a startling development, and the Sanhedrin convened to consider it. It would have been strange if those high councillors, representing the parties of the Sadducees and the Pharisees, who had long ago pronounced against our Lord and were watching for an opportunity to arraign Him, had credited the report. They would regard this latest miracle, like all the others which He had wrought, as an imposture; yet they recognised it as a serious aggravation of an already dangerous situation, since by confirming the popular faith in His Messiahship it would fan the flame of revolutionary zeal and provoke the imperial government to stern measures. What steps should be taken? was the question. "If we let this fellow alone as we are doing, every one will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and do away with our Holy Place and our nation."

It was the feeble attitude of weak men confronted by dread alternatives—on the one hand the risk of a popular insurrection should they, as they fain would,

take stern measures with the impostor, and on the other the grave consequence which must ensue if they let him alone ; and it fretted the masterful spirit of the Chief Priest Joseph Caiaphas, who in virtue of his office was President of the court. He was, like all the priestly order, a Sadducee ; and with aristocratic contempt of the populace and that insolence which, as the historian Josephus testifies, characterised the Sadducees, he angrily interposed, denouncing the pusillanimity of his irresolute colleagues. " You know nothing," he cried ; " you never consider that it is to your interest that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation be not destroyed." It was a plain statement of the issue : Jesus must be put to death or the nation would perish. It was the judgment of a strong, resolute, and overbearing leader, and it was accepted by the court.

The judgment was more profoundly true than either Caiaphas or his colleagues realised. " This," observes the Evangelist, " he said not of himself, but, being High Priest that eventful year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only but that He might gather into one the scattered children of God." There was indeed a dramatic fitness in the utterance by the lips of the High Priest of that unconscious prophecy of the Infinite Sacrifice which redeemed the world. And there was in it also a tragic irony, since in decreeing the death of our Lord the Sanhedrin decreed the national disaster which they thought thereby to avert.



## ON THE ROAD TO DEATH

Jo. xi. 54-57. Mt. xx. 17-34; Mk. x. 32-52; Lk. xviii. 31-34 (xxii. 25, 26), 35-xix. 28. Jo. xii. 1-8; Mt. xxvi. 6-13; Mk. xiv. 3-9.

WHATEVER hope our Lord may have entertained that the miracle would so conquer the enmity of the rulers that He might return to Jerusalem and resume His ministry there was dispelled by the Sanhedrin's resolution. He withdrew from Bethany. Perhaps He thought of returning to Bethabara; but presently He learned that the rulers, finding Him gone, had issued a proclamation requiring that any one acquainted with His whereabouts should lodge information in order to His arrest. They would quickly have been apprised of His presence at Bethabara, that busy ford of the Jordan; and so He betook Himself to Ephraim, a peaceful little town twenty miles north of Jerusalem, surrounded by wheat-fields which gave it all its prosperity and its only fame, since just as we speak of "carrying coals to Newcastle," the Jews in those days spoke of "carrying straw to Ephraim." There He found a secure asylum; for not merely did Ephraim lie remote among the uplands with the wilderness of Judæa betwixt it and the capital, but it was close to the Samaritan frontier and in case of alarm He might easily escape from the Sanhedrin's jurisdiction.

That year (29 A.D.) the Passover fell on April 16. The sacred week began on the 12th, and on the 10th He left Ephraim and set out for Jerusalem, accom-

panied not only by the Twelve but by the townsfolk who were also going thither to keep the Feast. For some twelve miles the route ran south-eastward, winding through the mountains till it reached the Plain of Jericho and joined the highway from the north. As they journeyed, the travellers were wont to sing glad psalms, but the voices of those pilgrims from Ephraim were hushed. For the bearing of Jesus cast an awe upon them. He strode on in advance rapt in meditation; and, says the Evangelist, His disciples "were amazed, and the others, as they followed, were afraid." Cf. Ps. xlii. 4.  
Mk. x. 32.

What His meditations were the Twelve fancied that they knew. Despite His reiterated admonitions the Jewish ideal of the Messianic Kingdom as a kingdom of this world was fixed in their minds, and it was only the stern logic of events and the subsequent illumination of the Holy Spirit that dispelled it. Sure of His Messiahship, they regarded His lowliness as only a temporary disguise, and were ever expecting Him to cast it off and manifest Himself in regal majesty. Their confidence had indeed been shaken by the triumphant hostility of the rulers; but it had been confirmed by His recent miracle at Bethany, and now that He was going up to Jerusalem, they imagined that the long expected, long delayed *dénouement* was at hand and He was going thither to claim His throne and put His adversaries to confusion by the revelation of His rightful glory.

Such was their fond hope that April morning when they set forth from Ephraim. As He strode on in silence, they fancied that He was immersed in meditation on the grand issue; but in truth He was thinking

of His bitter Passion, and presently He told them the reality. Twice already in the course of that final year of His ministry had He expressly forewarned them of it. The first occasion was at Cæsarea Philippi after Peter's memorable confession of His Messiahship, and there He merely intimated that He would be put to death by the rulers and rise again. Then on the way home from Cæsarea Mt. xvii. 22, 23; Mk. ix. 31; Lk. ix. 44. He repeated the announcement, adding the distressful detail of His betrayal. Now He unfolds the whole tragedy. "Look you," said He, "we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the Chief Priests and Scribes: and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him and spit on Him and scourge Him and kill Him: and after three days He will rise again."

Obsessed with the idea of the coming triumph, what could they make of this? It simply bewildered them; and so far as they attached any meaning to it, they took it as a premonition of a stern conflict issuing in ultimate victory. Presently it appeared how far they were from recognising the grim reality. They reached the highway from the north which at that season was thronged with troops of Galilean pilgrims to the Holy City; and there, probably by appointment, they were joined by a company of friends from Capernaum. Among these was Salome, the mother of James and John; and hardly had she greeted her sons when she unfolded to them a high purpose which she had conceived. A report of the miracle at Bethany had reached her, and it convinced her that the long expected consummation was at hand. The Lord was going up to

Jerusalem, and surely His errand was nothing else than the establishment of His Kingdom. She was ambitious for the advancement of her sons ; and knowing how near they stood to the Master, unrivalled save by Peter in His regard, she was confident that they would hold the chief places of honour at His royal court. But she would leave nothing to chance ; and her idea was that they should forthwith approach Him and petition Him on the strength of their approved devotion to Cf. Mt. promise them, after the manner of an oriental <sup>xiv. 7 ;</sup> potentate, whatever boon they might crave. <sup>Mk. vi. 22, 23.</sup> Then, when they had His pledge, they would present their claim.

They shrank from the adventure, feeling the dishonour of thus stealing a march on their comrades and apprehending His displeasure ; but Salome would take no refusal. If they would not present the petition, she would present it for them ; and she led them to the Master. "Teacher," said she, "our desire is that whatever we ask, you should do for us." But He would not pledge Himself in the dark. "What is it," He asked, "that you desire ?" "Say," she answered, "that these my two sons are to sit one on your right hand and one on your left in your Kingdom."

Just a week later the Lord was hanging on a cross with two fellow-sufferers "one on His right hand and one on His left." He knew the dread reality, and He turned to the two brothers, pitying their fond delusion. "You know not," He <sup>Mt. xxvii. 38 ; Mk. xv. 27.</sup> exclaimed, "what you are asking ! Can you drink the cup which I am soon to drink ?" Fancying that He meant the conflict which would prelude the winning of His throne and that He was challenging their courage

to face it, they answered: "We can." Indeed there was a conflict before Him, and they and all His faithful followers would share it. "My cup you will drink; but," He added, "to sit on My right hand and on My left—this is not Mine to give; no, it is theirs for whom it has been prepared."

What did He mean? "Suppose," says St. Chrysostom, "there is an umpire, and many gallant athletes are entering the lists. Two of these who are intimate with him approach him and say: 'Arrange that we be crowned and proclaimed victors,' relying on their good will and friendship with him. But he answers: 'This is not mine to give; it is theirs for whom it has been prepared by their efforts and sweat.'" And even so with the honours of the Kingdom of Heaven. They are not gifts; they are prizes, and they must be won by strenuous devotion.

The ten, following close, overheard the colloquy, and they were naturally aggrieved at the attempt of their two comrades to snatch an advantage over them. The Lord observed their resentful looks and, beckoning them to His side, taught them a lesson which they as well as James and John had need to learn. They were all alike ambitious to be great in His Kingdom; and it was indeed a worthy ambition, if only they realised what constitutes greatness there. In the kingdoms of this world they are great who have dominion and exercise authority over their fellows; but in the Kingdom of Heaven self-devotion is the path to honour. He is the greatest there who serves most, "even," says the Lord, reiterating with solemn emphasis His intimation of His approaching Passion and challenging them to follow Him on that painful

road, "as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many."

Travelling southward the pilgrims soon drew near to Jericho. It was a prosperous city, deriving much wealth from the palms which flourished so luxuriantly in its neighbourhood. Being a prosperous town and, moreover, a principal station on the highway from the north, it had a custom-house with a large staff of tax-gatherers; but wherever there is wealth, there is also poverty, and Jericho had its full tale of mendicants. Especially at the festal seasons when the highway was thronged with pious pilgrims, they were accustomed to post themselves by the wayside just without the city-gate, displaying their misery and craving charity. Among the mendicants waiting there that evening as our Lord and His retinue approached was a blind man named Bartimæus. The acclamations of the crowd excited his curiosity, and inquiring what was ado, he learned that Jesus the Nazarene was coming along the road. It was glad news for the poor creature. He had heard the fame of the wonderful prophet—how He had opened so many blind eyes and only the other week had raised a dead man to life. Often had he wished that he might meet with Him and experience His mercy, but he had no one to conduct him to Him. And now he had the opportunity which he craved. Jesus was approaching, and he lifted up his eager voice and shouted: "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!" The leaders of the procession bade him hold his peace, but he shouted all the more lustily: "Son of David, have pity on me!" Presently the Lord came up. He stopped. "Call him" He said. "Courage!" said the bystanders to Bartimæus; "rise, He is calling for



you." He threw off his encumbering mantle, sprang to his feet, and made his way through the crowd which opened to let him pass. "What," asked the Lord, "would you have Me do for you?" "Rabboni," he prayed, employing that most honourable of Jewish appellations which was to "Rabbi" as *Monsignor* is to *Monsieur*, "give me sight." "Go your way," was the answer. "Your faith has saved you."

He got his sight; and when the Lord moved on and entered the city-gate, he followed in His train, joining in the chorus of acclamation which rose ever higher as the news of the miracle spread and swelled the concourse. It was a noisy throng that surged along the streets, and as it approached the custom-house the din reached the ears of the chief tax-gatherer, a Jew named Zaccai or in Greek *Zacchæus*, a rich man but, like the rest of his order, a social outcast. He left his desk and hurried out to see what was ado, and on learning who it was that the populace was acclaiming, he was keenly interested. Rich as he was, his heart was unsatisfied; and ever since he had heard how the Lord was known in Galilee as "the Friend of tax-gatherers and sinners," he had been eager to meet with Him and perhaps learn from His gracious lips the secret of that peace for which he yearned. And now the blessed Saviour had come to Jericho and was there passing along the street. *Zacchæus* would fain see Him; but he was a little man, and even on tiptoe he could not look over the heads of the crowd, and when he essayed to push through, he would be jostled and jeered at. See Jesus he must and would, and an expedient occurred to him. The procession was

approaching the southern gate of the city ; and, extricating himself from the throng, he darted ahead and, passing through the gateway, climbed a huge sycomore which grew there, spreading its boughs over the road.

The Lord had observed the incident—the eagerness of Zacchæus to get near Him and the rough play of the crowd. He understood it all, and when He came to the tree He stopped. “Zacchæus,” said He, “hasten down ; for I must stay at your house to-day.” What was the necessity ? It was evening when He reached Jericho, and since the Jewish day was reckoned from sunset to sunset, the new day had already begun. He must break His journey ; for even had it been safe to travel after nightfall up the Ascent of Blood, He was weary with the long march from Ephraim. And moreover the day which had just begun was the Sabbath, and 2000 cubits was the limit of a Sabbath Day’s journey. So He must stay at Jericho till the Sabbath was over. As He traversed the city, foot-sore and travel-stained, amid the acclamations of the crowd, no one had ever thought of offering Him hospitality, and He had to crave it of the despised taxgatherer.

Nor did He crave it in vain. Zacchæus had been eager to see His face and perhaps catch His notice, and now his desire was fulfilled far beyond his hope. He scrambled down and joyfully bade Him welcome. It was a rebuke to the bystanders, and for very shame they should have held their peace ; but their prejudice was strong, and as Zacchæus conducted the Lord away, a murmur went round : “He has gone to lodge with a sinner !” Zacchæus heard it, but he said nothing at the moment. His house stood hard by on the fair plain where the palms flourished so luxuriantly and

where the wealthier sort of citizens had their mansions; and he escorted Jesus thither. The crowd followed, and on reaching the entrance Zacchæus stopped and addressed Him in their hearing. He cared little for their contempt, being accustomed to it; but he would fain prove that the Lord's grace had not been ill bestowed, and he made a public confession of "repentance, faith, and new obedience." "Look you, Lord," he cried, "the half of my property I give to the poor, and if I have made any wrongful exaction from any one, I give it back fourfold." It was a lavish atonement. He devoted half of his honest wealth to charity, whereas a fifth was the extremity of Pharisaic ostentation; and whatever fraud he might have perpetrated, he vowed a fourfold restitution, though the Law required merely payment of "the principal" and "the fifth part more thereto."

It was a truly heroic surrender, proving his full repentance and his resolute purpose to have done with his evil past; and the Lord hailed it gladly. "To-day," said He to the carping crowd,<sup>1</sup> "has salvation come to this house, since he too is a son of Abraham." It was a generous vindication of Zacchæus. An outcast though he was in their eyes, he was still a Jew and, by reason of his faith, a true son of Abraham, "the Father of the Faithful." And then He added a vindication of His own gracious dealing with Zacchæus. It was fitting that He, the Friend of Sinners, should thus befriend a sinner; "for the Son of Man came to seek and save what is lost."

<sup>1</sup> Reading "said to *them*" in Lk. xix. 9 on the authority of Old Latin and Syriac versions.

A record of our Lord's converse with the tax-gatherer and his household during that Sabbath which He spent under his roof—the last Sabbath of His earthly life, since on the next His mangled body was lying in the sepulchre—would indeed have been a precious page of the Gospel narrative ; but unfortunately the story is unwritten. All that is told of Zacchæus we owe to St. Luke, who here as everywhere in his narrative has shown his peculiar interest in the Lord's kindness toward the sinful and the outcast ; and surely he would have related the sequel had the Jewish prejudice so strong in the first generation of believers suffered it to be remembered until his day. This much, however, his diligent research has rescued from oblivion, albeit somewhat Cf. Lk. iv. confusedly—that after His wont the Lord <sup>16.</sup> attended the synagogue that Sabbath and was invited to address the congregation.

There was one engrossing idea in the minds of His hearers, even His own disciples. He was on His way to Jerusalem, and “ they fancied that the Kingdom of God would immediately be declared.” At last the long expected consummation was at hand. He was going up to the Holy City to announce Himself as the King of Israel and claim His throne. He must disabuse their minds ; and so in the course of His sermon, by way of forewarning them what hindrances His Kingdom would encounter, He introduced a parable which is unique among His recorded parables in this—that it is based upon a recent incident of contemporary history. In his will King Herod the Great had nominated his son Archelaus as the successor to his throne, and on his decease in the year 4 B.C. the prince visited

Rome to obtain the Emperor's confirmation of his title. But he was unacceptable to the Jews, and they petitioned that neither he nor any other of the Herodian family should succeed. "A certain nobleman," said our Lord, "journeyed to a far country to get himself a kingdom and return; but his citizens hated him, and they despatched an embassy after him. 'We will not,' said they, 'have this man reign over us.'"

Next morning He resumed His journey, and toward evening He reached the village of Bethany. There He had a right royal welcome. Tidings of His approach had preceded Him, and in brave defiance of the Sanhedrin's edict the folk had resolved to honour Him with a public entertainment. The scene was the house of Simon, evidently the chief personage of the village. He had been a leper, and he would the more gladly undertake the office of host if, as is probable, he owed his healing to the Master. Of course Lazarus was one of the company. And what of his sisters? Jewish sentiment debarred women from participation in a public feast, but Martha, that good housewife, was charged with its superintendence. As for Mary, all that was allowed her was to take her place among the spectators and watch the banquet and listen to the conversation; but therewith she was not content. Her heart was overflowing with gratitude to the dear Master who had not merely the other week restored her brother but redeemed her from shame a year and a half ago; and she was set upon doing Him honour. She had procured a vase of costly ointment; and when the company had taken their places about the table, she entered with her tresses hanging loose and, bending over the couch where He reclined, poured her

fragrant offering over His feet and wiped them with her flowing hair.

The company were surprised, and no wonder. It was indeed the custom to anoint the head of an honoured guest, and it would have been nothing strange had Mary assumed the rôle of a servant and wrought this office on the Master. But it was not His head that she anointed : it was His feet.

Cf. Jo.

And unbound hair was the token of an harlot.

xii. 3.

The story of her shame would be no secret ; but wherefore, they would ask, should she thus blazon it ?

And why should she wipe His feet with her loose tresses ? They marvelled, but He understood. It was a re-enactment of that scene in the house of Simon

the Pharisee when she had crept to His couch and anointed His feet, raining tears

Cf. Lk. vii.

37, 38.

over them and wiping them off with her hair ; and it told Him how she cherished His grace in undying remembrance and would fain requite it.

The company wondered, and one raised his voice in angry protest. It was one of the Twelve—Judas the Man of Kerioth. And what was his grievance ? He was the treasurer of the Apostle-band ; and, marking with his keen eyes the quality of Mary's offering, he had appraised it at three hundred *denarii*—no mean sum, since a *denarius* was a day's wage at that period, and three hundred were a whole year's earnings. It was indeed a precious tribute, and had she bestowed the price upon the Master, Judas would have been well pleased ; for, says the

Jo. xii. 6.

Evangelist with stinging contempt, " he was a thief and, having the coffer, used to pilfer the contributions." Had she bestowed the money, he would



have had his pickings ; and that was his grievance. " Wherefore this loss ? " he cried. " Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred *denarii* and given to the poor ? "

" Let her alone ! " said Jesus sternly. " Why are you annoying her ? It is a beautiful work that she has wrought on Me." He saw in Mary's offering a significance which she never dreamed of at the moment but which, ere the week was over, she would recognise when she helped to embalm His body and lay it in the sepulchre. " Let her alone ! " said He. " It is for the day of My burial that she has hoarded it. For the poor you have always with you, but Me you have not always." It was indeed a beautiful work, and it would be told evermore in her praise. " Verily I tell you, wherever the Gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done shall be talked of for a memorial of her."

## THE PASSION-WEEK



## HIS ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM

Jo. xii. 9-19; Mt. xxi. 1-11; Mk. xi. 1-11; Lk. xix. 29-44.  
Mk. xii. 41-44; Lk. xxi. 1-4.

MEANWHILE what had been happening at Jerusalem? It was customary for Hellenists—Jews resident abroad in heathen countries—to arrive early that they might have time, ere the Feast began, for ceremonial purification from the defilement of heathen intercourse. Hence the city was already thronged with worshippers from afar. They had heard the fame of the Galilean prophet, and what they learned on their arrival whetted their interest. They were eager to see and hear Him, but in view of the hostility of the rulers it was doubtful whether He would venture to appear, and the question was on every lip: “What think you? That He will not come to the Feast?” Hardly less than their interest in Jesus was their interest in Lazarus, the man whom He had raised from the dead; and to the annoyance of the rulers they resorted to Bethany to gaze at him. At length it was reported that Jesus was approaching, and when they learned of His arrival at Bethany they trooped out thither and not a few of them confessed their faith in Him. So exasperated were the Chief Priests that they forthwith supplemented their edict for the arrest of Jesus by a resolution to put Lazarus also to death. It reached his ears, and from the fact that neither of

them figures in the ensuing narrative it would appear that he and his sister Martha took flight after the public entertainment. Mary, however, in her devotion to the Master remained, and not only stood by His cross and aided in His burial but was privileged with the first vision of Him after the Resurrection.

It would have been perilous for our Lord to brave the hostility of the rulers by entering the city with no other retinue than His feeble band of followers; and the manifestation of popular interest on His arrival at Bethany that Sunday evening suggested to Him a procedure which would not merely ensure Him against immediate molestation but afford an opportunity for a final and singularly impressive appeal to the crowded city. There was an ancient prophecy which pictured the entrance of the Messiah, the King of Israel, into His sacred capital: "Rejoice, Zech. ix. 9. greatly, O daughter of Zion! shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee. Righteous and victorious He; meek, and riding upon an ass, yea upon a colt, a she-ass's foal." Observe the imagery. The Messiah is represented as riding not upon a horse, which the Jews knew only as a battle-charger, but upon an ass, which was not with them, as with the Greeks and Romans, a despised animal but a goodly creature, highly esteemed and ridden by princes on peaceful errands. And so, when the prophet depicted the Messiah as riding on an ass, and that a colt hitherto unriden and thus fit for sacred use, he proclaimed Him as the holy and gracious Prince of Peace. It was another sort of Messiah that the Jews were

Cf. Num.

xix. 2; 1

Sam. vi. 7;

2 Sam. vi.

3.

expecting; and in those days there was much disputation among the Rabbis how the prophecy might accord with their accustomed dream of a Messiah "coming in the clouds of heaven," a mighty Conqueror. Cf. Dan. vii. 13.

That ancient scripture being thus familiar and at the same time presenting the spiritual ideal of Messiahship which He had all along so unsuccessfully striven to commend, our Lord bethought Himself that He would enact it after the histrionic fashion congenial to the oriental mind. Probably in the course of the evening's entertainment He privately arranged with a disciple resident at Bethphage, a neighbouring village on the crest of Olivet barely a mile north-west of Bethany, that he should next morning have a young ass tethered at his door by the cross-road just outside the village. Two of the Twelve would come and fetch it, and to prevent mistake they would be furnished with a password—"The Lord has need of it."

Next morning He sent the two. They found the ass, and as they untethered it, they were challenged: "What are you about, untethering the colt?" They gave the password and got the beast. They led it off to Bethany, and the disciples spread a cloak over its back and mounted the Master. The scene was witnessed by a multitude of spectators, not only the folk of Bethany and its neighbourhood but others more numerous who had come out from Jerusalem; and they caught its meaning. They cut boughs from the palm-trees which lined the road to the city, and carpeted it with their garments and strewed it with blossoms after the manner of a royal progress; Cf. 2 Ki. ix. 13.



and as the Lord rode forward, they formed in procession, chanting triumphal psalms. "Hosanna!" Cf. Pss. they shouted. "Blessed be He who is cxviii. 25, coming in the name of the Lord, even 26, cxlviii. 1. the King of Israel. Blessed be the coming Kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest!"

Curiosity had brought some Pharisees from Jerusalem, and resenting the popular enthusiasm they remonstrated with the Lord. "Teacher," said they, "rebuke your disciples." "I tell you," He answered, "that should these be silent, the stones will cry out."

Leaving Bethany, they surmounted the crest of Olivet and wound their way down the mountain-slope. Across the ravine of the Kidron the city, sacred and dear to every Jewish heart, was standing peaceful and beautiful in the light of that April morning; and as the Lord surveyed her and thought of the disaster which her wild dream of deliverance from the Roman yoke would inevitably precipitate and which would surely have been averted had she recognised in Him her Promised Saviour, tears filled His eyes and a lamentation broke from His lips: "O that you had recognised in this day the things which make for peace! As it is, they are hidden from your eyes. Days will come upon you when your foes will embank a trench against you, and ring you round, and hem you in on every side, all because you did not recognise the season of your visitation."

Crossing the Kidron, the procession passed through the city-gate and the wondering citizens gathered to see what was ado and joined the train. As they

surged along, the streets shook with the trampling of their feet and resounded with their shouting until, says the Evangelist, "all the city rocked." Mt. xxi. 10. It was, as the word implies, as though it were shaken with an earthquake. Thus escorted the Lord took His way to the Temple and, entering its quiet precincts, escaped from the clamour. He would be glad of a season of repose; for the scene which He had enacted would be little pleasing to Him. Had it not been written of Him of old that "He would not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street" ? Is. xlii. 2 ; cf. Mt. xii. 19. His entry had been no triumph for Him but a hard ordeal, and He had sustained it not for His own aggrandisement but with a gracious purpose, that He might leave no means untried for winning the obdurate city.

Now that it was over, He was glad of repose ; and weary in flesh and spirit He engaged that day in none of His accustomed activities of teaching and healing. It is written that He "surveyed the whole scene" ; and it was probably while He was thus occupied that an incident occurred which Mk. xi, 11 engaged His sympathetic regard and evoked from Him a gracious comment. He was seated in that familiar and secluded nook of the Temple-court hard Cf. Jo. viii. 20. by the Treasury, observing the worshippers as they passed and made their offerings. The rich swept by and ostentatiously cast in the large Cf. Mt. vi. 2. contributions which they could so easily afford ; and for them He had no praise. But presently a worshipper of another sort timidly advanced—a poor woman, evidently known to Him. She was a widow, and it may be that He had encountered her

and comforted her sorrow during His recent ministry in the city. And now she had come with a thank-offering. In the world's sight it was indeed a poor gift—only two *lepta*. A *lepton*, like our mite, was the smallest of copper coins. It was, as the Evangelist explains, half of a *quadrans* or farthing; and since it took sixty-four *quadrantes* to make a silver *denarius*, which was a day's wage at that period, it was indeed a poor offering that the widow brought. But it was all she had, and when she had given it, her hand was empty. Little in the world's sight, it was much to her, and it was much in the Lord's sight. He saw not the poor gift but the sacrifice which it involved and the love which it expressed. "Verily I tell you," said He to His disciples, "that this poor widow has contributed more than all the contributors to the Treasury. For they all contributed what they could well spare, while she contributed what she could ill afford—all that she had, her whole livelihood."

Thus He "surveyed the scene" in the Temple-court, and then He would go forth into the city. He would revisit the scenes of His previous ministry and greet His friends; and at evening He quitted Jerusalem and "went out to Bethany with the Twelve." It is not the village of Bethany that is here meant.

Dt. xvi. 1-8. The Holy City, "the place which the Lord had chosen to cause His name to dwell there," was the scene of the paschal celebration. There at the altar in the court of the Temple must the lamb be slain, and there too within the walls of the city must the unleavened bread be baked; but since there was insufficient accommodation within the narrow circuit for the multitude of worshippers, many perforce

lodged outside, and that the Law might be observed, all the western slope of Olivet as far as Bethphage was regarded as within the walls of the city and went by the name of Bethany. It would indeed have been most natural that the Lord should lodge with His friends in the neighbouring village of Bethany, but if Lazarus and Martha had been driven thence by the menace of the rulers' wrath, their hospitable home was no longer open to Him; and the Evangelists have told us what His practice was during the Passion-week. "Each day," says St. Luke, "He was teaching in the Temple, and each night He would go forth and bivouac on Mount Olivet." And St. Matthew means precisely the same when he says: "He went forth outside the city to Bethany, and bivouacked there." His retreat was an olive orchard called Gethsemane or the Oil-press; and in that warm climate it was no hardship and no uncommon experience for Him and His disciples to pass the night wrapped in their mantles beneath the leafy trees.

xxi. 37.

xxi. 17.

Mt. xxvi.

36;

Mk. xiv.

32; Lk.

xxii. 39;

Jo. xviii. 2.

## CONTROVERSIES WITH THE RULERS

Mk. xi. 12-15a, 18, 19; Mt. xxi. 14-17; Lk. xix. 47, 48. Mk. xi. 20-26; Mt. xxi. 18-22. Mt. xxi. 23-xxii. 14; Mk. xi. 27-xii. 12; Lk. xx. 1-19. Jo. vii. 53-viii. 11. Mt. xxii. 15-46; Mk. xii. 13-37; Lk. xx. 20-44.

EARLY next morning they took their way back to Jerusalem. Had the Lord lodged at the house of Lazarus, He would have been hospitably entertained and would have breakfasted ere His departure; but in the garden there was no kindly hostess to minister to His necessities, and they left it fasting, meaning to procure food in the city. Amid the excitement of the previous day He had eaten little, and now He was hungry; and as they descended the mountain-side, He observed a fig tree by the wayside some distance off, conspicuous by reason of its abundant foliage, and He welcomed the prospect of immediate refreshment. It was not indeed the season for figs, but, as Pliny remarks in his *Natural History*, it is a peculiarity of the fig tree that it forms its fruit before it puts forth its leaves, and it was a natural inference that this tree, growing in the rich soil of the olive-orchards, had matured early. He hastened toward it, only to find it barren, like that fig tree  
Lk. xiii. 6-9. planted in a vineyard which had already served Him as a parable of the Jewish people, so privileged yet so unprofitable. And now by an acted parable He repeats the lesson which He had then

taught. "Never more," said He, "may any one eat fruit of you!"

They passed on and entered the city; and presently the Lord betook Himself to the outer court of the Temple, always a place of public resort and thronged at that season with the worshippers who had gathered to the Feast and who were eager to see and hear Him. There He resumed His accustomed ministry of teaching and healing, regardless of the Sanhedrin's decree. The rulers would fain have arrested Him, but they durst not; for, says the Evangelist, "all the people Lk. xix.  
48. were hanging on His lips." And so for fear

of raising a tumult they stood by in impotent wrath. Only once did they venture to interpose. It was when the popular enthusiasm was at its height and the very children swelled the chorus of acclamation by chanting the refrain which yesterday had rung through the streets: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" This within the sacred precincts! "Do you hear," cried the Chief Priests and Scribes, "what these are saying?" "Yes," He answered, quoting from the Ps. viii. 2. Psalmist with that scornful question where- with He loved to taunt the Rabbis with ignorance of their own scriptures; "did you never read: 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou didst perfect praise'?"

At nightfall He left the city and returned with the Twelve to Gethsemane. It was dark as they climbed the mountain-slope; but as they returned next morning, the disciples remarked with surprise that the fig tree was blasted. They had thought nothing of the sentence which He had pronounced yester-morning, taking it as merely the sort of impatient malediction



which escapes one's lips in a petulant mood. "Rabbi," cried Peter, "see! the fig tree which you cursed is withered." It was truly an amazing consequence of a light word, as they deemed it, forgetting that no word of the Master was ever lightly spoken; and He told them in reply that if only they had faith in their hearts, their words too would be potent. For faith achieves impossibilities, as the Jewish proverb put it, "uprooting mountains."

Thus conversing, they entered the city and betook themselves to the Temple. His purpose was to continue His ministry there, but He found Himself confronted by a novel and difficult ordeal. The situation was embarrassing for the rulers, and they had consulted how they might deal with it. While He retained His popularity, they durst not meddle with Him, but if only they could discredit Him with the multitude, then they might do with Him what they would; and so they had devised means to compass this end. They would engage Him in public controversy, plying Him with vexatious questions in the hope of puzzling Him or else betraying Him into some heretical pronouncement which would alienate the popular sympathy and thus leave Him at their mercy. It was a clever stratagem, and it was skilfully executed; but they found themselves opposed by a skill outmatching theirs, and in each successive encounter they were ignominiously worsted.

First, while He was teaching, there approached Him a deputation of the Sanhedrin, composed of the Chief Priests—Caiaphas the acting Chief Priest with Annas and the other Chief Priests *emeriti*—representing the

party of the Sadducees, and the Scribes and Elders representing that of the Pharisees, and haughtily challenged His credentials. "By what authority," they demanded, "are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?" It was surely a reasonable question. They were the constituted rulers of the Jewish people. The administration of the Temple belonged to the Priests, and teaching was the business of the Rabbis; and thus in presuming to teach in the court of the Temple without official sanction He was usurping the prerogatives of both. Their primary design was to impress the people by an assertion of their official dignity and arouse their resentment of so flagrant a disregard thereof; and they would hope moreover that in defending Cf. Jo. x. His action He would reiterate His high claim <sup>30</sup> to divine authority and thus convict Himself of blasphemy.

It was a sudden onslaught, but He encountered it with that prompt dexterity, that ready resourcefulness which He exhibited in every sudden emergency. "I will ask you a question," said He. "Answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. The Baptism of John—whence was it? from Heaven or from men?" It was a complete checkmate. The Baptist had testified that Jesus was the Messiah, and if they acknowledged his divine commission, then why had they not believed his testimony? And had they denied it, defaming that mighty prophet who had so stirred the nation, they would have excited a storm of popular indignation. It was an awkward dilemma, and they maintained an embarrassed silence. "Answer Me," He insisted, and

they took refuge in a humiliating profession of uncertainty: "We do not know." "Neither," retorted He with crushing scorn, "do I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

It was more than a clever evasion. It was a sharp home-thrust; and He pointed it with a parable. "What think you? A man had two sons. He came and said to the first: 'My son, go and work to-day in the vineyard.' 'Yes, sir,' he answered. And he did not go. He came and said likewise to the second; and he answered: 'I will not.' By and by he repented and went. Which of the two did the father's will?" "The latter" they faltered, pronouncing their own condemnation. For that first son with his hollow profession was an image of themselves. The Baptist's message had been a proclamation of cf. Jo. v. the Saviour's advent, and though at first 35. they had been impressed, they had in their self-righteousness resented his call to repentance; and while the sinners whom they despised had turned at his call from their evil way, they had rejected his message and the Saviour whom he proclaimed. "Verily I tell you that the taxgatherers and the harlots are going before you into the Kingdom of God."

With this stinging sentence He turned to the people who were crowding round and had witnessed the encounter, and spoke a parable to them. He told how a landlord, desirous of making good use of his land and thereby not only enriching himself but benefiting others, turned what would cf. Is. v. 2. else have been waste ground into a vineyard, sparing no outlay to render it productive.

He planted it with vines, fenced it round to keep out mischievous beasts, constructed a winepress for crushing the precious juice out of the ripe grapes, and built a tower where, after the fashion still prevailing, sentinels would be stationed to keep watch night and day while the fruit was maturing and raise the alarm if marauders appeared. It happened that, when he had just completed it, he had to leave home and reside abroad for a time; and, that his vineyard might not lie idle during his absence, he let it to several husbandmen on an agreed rental.

Cf. Ps.  
lxxx. 12,  
13; Song  
ii. 15.

It was a fine opportunity for the husbandmen. If they farmed the vineyard industriously and well, they not only would easily pay the rent but might enrich themselves and, like the landlord before them, acquire vineyards of their own. But in those days of political and social disquietude wild revolutionary ideas—exemplified by the maxim that “a rich man was either a rascal or the heir of a rascal” (*dives aut iniquus est aut iniqui hæres*)—were abroad and had captivated discontented minds averse from honest industry. These husbandmen regarded their landlord as an oppressive capitalist; and when he sent three of his servants to receive the rent at the ingathering of the first season’s harvest, they violently attacked them. One was heavily cudgelled, another was killed outright, and the third was pelted with stones. Unwilling to take severe measures, he sent another and larger deputation; and, emboldened by impunity, they repeated the outrage. Still his patience held out, and he decided to give them yet another chance and sent his son to deal with them. They misconstrued

his forbearance, taking it for weakness and thinking that he was afraid of them; and when the young master appeared, they said: "Here is the heir! Let us kill him and take possession." They dragged him out of the vineyard and murdered him, fancying that the good old landlord would be terrorised and they would be left in unchallenged possession. Cowards themselves, as bullies always are, they thought he was a coward too.

But they misjudged him. The Lord's hearers, with the fondness for a story so characteristic of orientals, had listened with keen interest; and here He pauses and asks their verdict on the case, "What will the master of the vineyard do to those husbandmen?" They did not perceive the drift of the parable—that it was a picture of the Jewish people and their behaviour to God. He had sent them a succession of prophets, and these they had persecuted and sometimes martyred; and now He had sent them His Son, and Him they were about to crucify. This would be the consummation of their guilt, and it would seal their doom—that doom which was presently executed when God cast off His ancient people and bestowed their abused privileges on the despised Gentiles. "What," asked our Lord, "will the master of the vineyard do to those husbandmen?" "Wretches!" they cried. "He will wretchedly destroy them, and will let the vineyard to others, such as will pay him his fruits at their seasons."

They did not realise that they were passing judgment on their nation and pronouncing its condemnation; but the rulers did, and they hotly protested. "Never!"

they cried. He "looked upon them" with His calm, searching gaze. "Did you never," said He, "read this scripture?—

'The stone which the builders rejected—  
this is made the head of the corner.

Ps. cxviii.  
22, 23.

This is the Lord's doing,  
and it is marvellous in our eyes.' "

It is a sentence from that psalm which was sung by the repatriated exiles as they repaired to the Feast of Tabernacles in the new Temple which they had so painfully built under Zerubbabel and Joshua. They had constructed it, so far as they might, of the ruined fabric of the old Temple; and the story is that there was a stone of the gateway, defaced yet hallowed by ancient associations, which had been replaced despite the remonstrance of the architects. It met the eyes of the worshippers as they entered, and the sight of it flooded their hearts with sacred and tender memories. Despised by the builders, it was precious to God, and He had used it for His glory. And even so might it not be with the despised Gentiles? Cf. Ezr. iii.

It was for those haughty Priests and Rabbis a humiliating issue of the encounter which they had so cavalierly provoked, all the more humiliating by reason of its publicity. So far from discrediting Jesus in the popular esteem they had enhanced His reputation, and they could only gnash their teeth and retire.<sup>1</sup> Their discomfiture merely sharpened their animosity, nor were they long in devising a fresh attack. It was the Scribes, the guardians of the Sacred Law, who

<sup>1</sup> On Mt. xxii. 1-14 cf. *The Days of His Flesh*, Introd. p. xxvi.



conducted it. It happened conveniently that they were just then engaged with a case of conjugal infidelity.

cf. Lev. x. 10; Dt. xii. 22. The legal ordinance was that both the adulteress and her paramour should be put to death; and here they saw an opportunity of embarrassing our Lord. They haled the wretched woman to the court of the Temple and, setting her before Him as He sat teaching, stated the case and requested His judgment upon it. "Teacher," said they, "this woman has been caught in the very act of adultery, and in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such. What then do *you* say?"

What could He say? If, true to His character as "the Friend of sinners," He advocated mercy, they would accuse Him of subverting the Sacred Law; while, if He approved the inhuman ordinance, He would not only offend the popular sentiment but expose Himself to the taunt of inconsistency, since He had a Magdalene among His followers. They eagerly anticipated His verdict, but He refrained Himself. He stooped down and scribbled on the pavement, "as one does," observes an ancient interpreter, "who is unwilling to answer an untimely and unworthy question." It was not embarrassment; it was burning indignation at their heartlessness. But they took it for embarrassment and exultantly pressed for an answer. He lifted His glowing face. "That one of you," He cried, "who is sinless, let him first cast his stone at her." Then He stooped down again and resumed His nervous fingering.

It was an effective stroke. It transformed the scene. A moment ago they were standing there as accusers of the trembling culprit; now they stand convicted

by conscience, that stern Judge within their breasts. With never a word they stole away, "beginning," it is written, "with the older men till the last was gone." It was natural that the older should go first, since they best knew the plague of their own hearts; but the reason why the order of their going was remarked is that it was a reversal of the judicial procedure in the Sanhedrin, where the members gave their votes "beginning with the youngest."

The Lord was left alone amid the encompassing throng with the woman before Him—they two together, *misera et misericordia*, as St. Augustine has it, that piteous one and Incarnate Pity. He raised His face. "My woman," said He, "where are they—those your accusers? Did no one condemn you?" "No one, Lord," she replied. "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more."<sup>1</sup>

Their discomfiture exasperated the Rabbis, and on their withdrawal from the court of the Temple they took counsel and devised another stratagem. They enlisted their disciples, the students who, like Saul of Tarsus a little earlier, "sat at their feet" in the Rabbinical College; and associating with them several of the Herodians, those Saddu-  
Cf. Mk.  
iii. 6.  
 cean courtiers of Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee, who were then at Jerusalem attending the Feast, commissioned them to approach the Lord in the guise of troubled inquirers. In those days the Jews were vassals of Rome, and not merely was the imperial taxation a grievous burden to an impoverished

<sup>1</sup> On the position of this passage (Jo. vii. 53-viii. 11)—a precious fragment of the Evangelic Tradition, being a reader's marginal comment on Jo. viii. 15 incorporated with the text by later copyists—cf. *The Days of His Flesh*, Introd. p. xix.

people but, being imposed by a heathen tyrant, it was an offence at once to their patriotism and to their religion. They fretted at it, nor were the Zealots alone in advocating resistance to the odious exaction. How could the Rabbis more surely entrap our Lord than by submitting this vexed question to His decision? It would wear an aspect of good faith on the lips of their disciples, ardent youths nurtured in the patriotic and religious atmosphere of Pharisaism; and hardly less on the lips of the Herodians, who, though Sadducees, were jealous of the honour of the native dynasty.

The deputies betook themselves to the court of the Temple and, deferentially approaching Him, propounded their problem with a fulsome adulation which even to one less keen-sighted would have sufficed to betray their insincerity. "Teacher," said they, "we know that you are true, and teach the way of God in truth; and you care for no one, for you do not look at men's face-value. Tell us then what your opinion is: Is it allowable to give tribute to the Emperor or not? Are we to give it or not to give it?" Had He answered "No," they would have delated Him to the Roman governor as a  
Cf. Lk. xxiii. 2. sedition-monger; had He answered "Yes," He would then have incurred popular odium by supporting the alien impost. He saw the snare, and He brushed it aside. "Show Me," said He, "the tribute coin"; and they handed Him a *denarius*. He held it up and exhibited the Emperor's medallion and the inscription: CAESAR AUGUSTUS DIVI F. PATER PATRIAE. "Whose," He demanded, "is this image and inscription?" "The Emperor's," they replied. "Then,"

said He, "pay what is the Emperor's to the Emperor, and what is God's to God."

It was more than a deft evasion. Observe His argument. In those days when the Jews were so widely dispersed, it was a wise ordinance of the Jewish law that "wherever any king's coinage obtained, there his authority should be acknowledged." The Roman *denarius* was current in Judæa, and its daily use was an acknowledgment of the Emperor's sovereignty and his title to tribute. See how our Lord expresses this. The question put to Him was: "Is it allowable to *give* tribute to the Emperor?" and He answers: "*Pay* what is the Emperor's to the Emperor." According to their own law the imperial tribute was not theirs to give or to withhold. It was a debt, and they were bound to pay it. So much for the civil aspect of the question; and what of its religious aspect? "God is our King, and submission to the Emperor is disloyalty to Him": so argued the zealous patriots, forgetting that God's is a spiritual Kingdom and the debt which they owed Him a spiritual tribute.

While the Pharisees were busy devising this attack upon our Lord, the Sadducees were not idle. Though they combined in common enmity against Him, they were naturally inveterate adversaries in politics and religion alike. In religion what chiefly differentiated them was the doctrine of immortality. Ac. xxiii. "Sadducees," it is written, "say that there <sup>8.</sup> is no resurrection, no angel or spirit, while Pharisees confess both." The blessed hope of a life hereafter was discovered late in the progress of revelation, first establishing itself in the Jewish mind amid the sufferings of the Babylonian Captivity as the one sufficient

vindication of God's hard dealings with His people. It is proclaimed by the Prophets and Psalmists ; but nowhere in the earlier Scriptures is it expressly affirmed, and hence the Sadducees rejected the later writings and acknowledged only the Books of Moses.

Here was an opportunity for puzzling our Lord and putting Him to public confusion. A party of Sadducees, not ill pleased by the failure of their Pharisaic rivals and confident of scoring an easy triumph by pouring scorn on that idea of a resurrection which they deemed so preposterously incredible, now approach Him. "Teacher," said they, quoting Dt. xxv. 5, 6. the ancient levirate law, "Moses said : ' If one die without children, his brother shall do a husband's part by his wife, and raise up seed for his brother.' " Then they presented a case—a purely fictitious case, since that law, designed of old when there was no thought of personal immortality, to prevent a man's name from being "blotted out of Israel," had long fallen into desuetude. It was the case of a man who died childless. He had six brothers, and they all in succession took his wife and all died without issue by her. She survived them all, and then she too died. "At the Resurrection then," was their problem, "whose wife will she be ? For all the seven had her."

It was an absurd question ; for even had the levirate law been still in force, no difficulty would have arisen, since the six brothers were none of them the woman's husband : they simply performed an husband's part by her, and she belonged throughout to her deceased husband. The case was an invention and a stupid invention, and the Lord might justly have swept the question contemptuously aside. But He answered it and exposed

the folly which prompted it. "You err," said He, "not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."

Here is a twofold indictment, and in establishing it He begins with the latter count—their ignorance of the power of God. Their error lay in their measurement of the possible by the actual. They were like that Siamese prince of whom the philosopher tells in his *Chapter of Probability*. A Dutch ambassador, entertaining him with the particularities of Holland, "amongst other things told him that the water in his country would sometimes be so hard in cold weather that men walked upon it, and that it would bear an elephant, if he were there. To which the king replied, 'Hitherto I have believed the strange things you have told me, because I looked upon you as a sober fair man; but now I am sure that you lie.'" For that prince his own experience in a torrid clime was the measure of the universe; and even so it was with the Sadducees. They construed the unseen and eternal in terms of the seen and temporal, oblivious that the earthly is but the shadow of the heavenly. Our human affections are immortal, and "the marriage of true minds" is an eternal union; but in the hereafter it will be a spiritual intimacy, absolved from the limitations of sense. "You err," said our Lord, "not knowing the power of God. For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor do the marriage office." The hallowed union is indeed imperishable, but it will be "marriage" no longer. Even as of old a life-transforming experience was signalled by the gift of a new name, and as it is Rev. ii. 17. written that a new name will be given to each heir of eternal glory, so too will it be with this and all those



sweet and tender affections which even here are our most precious possessions. They will endure in Eternity, but so transfigured and ennobled that the old names will no longer suffice.

“ What new name hae they gi'en thee, love,  
In the far-near countree,  
That nane can ken but them wha get ?  
O whisper it to me !

“ In the near far o' our young life  
Thy name was changed to mine.  
Oh, when I reach thy far-near hame,  
May my new name be thine ! ”

And now He turns to the other count of His indictment—their ignorance of the Scriptures. Though they rejected the later writings, they acknowledged the Pentateuch ; and was there indeed no testimony to the Resurrection there ? “ Have you not read in the Book of Moses in the passage about the Bush how Ex. iii. 6. God spoke to him ? ‘ I am,’ said He, ‘ the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.’ He is not a God of dead men but of living.”

In that ancient scripture, in order to assure Moses of His present and continual mercy, God reminds him of His mercy in bygone generations. It is one of those appeals to history which abound in the Old Testament and are so peculiarly and abidingly persuasive ; but it may seem as though in finding in it an intimation of immortality, our Lord imported into the passage an alien idea. His argument is that had those fathers of old ceased to be when they passed away, God must have said “ *I was their God.*” To

our minds it seems a mere verbal quibble, but even so it was a legitimate and cogent argument. For that was the very manner of Jewish exegesis in our Lord's day. It was precisely thus that His contemporaries handled the Scriptures, and in so reasoning with His adversaries He was meeting them on their own ground and turning their own weapons against them.

But in truth His argument was more, far more, than a dialectical stratagem. When God proclaimed Himself "the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob," it was His own eternity that He proclaimed, and their immortality is a corollary thereof. He is "the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever." All that He ever was He is and shall be evermore; and therefore "all live for Him." Whatsoever has once had a place in His heart must share His eternity; else He would be impoverished and diminished. Here as ever it was from God's side that our Lord looked. He knew what lies behind the veil, and the reasoning of those vain men, so confident in their blindness, awoke His sorrowful compassion. "You err!" He cried. "You greatly err!"

Among the throng which had watched the encounter between our Lord and those Sadducees there was a group of Pharisees including several Rabbis. It pleased them to witness the discomfiture of their hereditary adversaries; and so delighted were the Rabbis with His masterly vindication of their cardinal doctrine that they could not refrain from applause. "Teacher," they cried, "you have spoken nobly." Presently, however, they recollected themselves. They were not there to applaud Jesus but to put Him, if they might, to confusion, and they would fain again

adventure on the field where their rivals had so ignominiously failed. They had bethought themselves of another question for His embarrassment and chosen one of their number to propound it; and he now steps forward. "Teacher," said he, "which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

It appears a harmless question, but in truth it bristled with contention. The commandments of the Law, as the Scribes reckoned, numbered 613—248 affirmative and 365 negative; and they were further distinguished as "weighty" and "light." There was

much debate how many should be accounted weighty, but it was generally agreed that all commandments were weighty to which the penalty of excommunication or death was attached; and since these were mainly concerned with circumcision, leaven, Sabbath-keeping, sacrifice, and purification, the distinction fostered that tendency to ceremonialism which had so blighted religion in our Lord's day.

It was thus a highly contentious question that those Pharisees presented to our Lord, and they confidently anticipated that one so disdainful of their punctilious ceremonial would deliver an aggressive pronouncement. But they were disappointed. He answered:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might': this is the greatest and first command-

ment. And there is a second like it: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." These two commandments lie apart

Cf. Gen.  
xvii. 14;  
Ex. xii. 15,  
19, xxxi.  
14; Lev.  
vii. 20, 25;  
Num. xix.  
20.

in the ancient Law, one in the Book of Deuteronomy and the other in the Book of Leviticus ; and thus combined they constitute an admirable summary of religious duty in its double aspect—love of God and love of man. The point to be observed here is that, while He approved it, their combination was not our Lord's own device. It was a felicitous commonplace of Rabbinical doctrine, and some six months earlier He had commended it on the lips of another Cf. Lk. x. Scribe and shown the largeness of its implica- 27-  
tion. By quoting it so aptly here our Lord not merely affirmed the truth but so affirmed it that controversy was impossible. Had they challenged His reply, His assailants would have been challenging their own doctrine.

It completed their discomfiture that for the purpose which they had in view their spokesman had been ill chosen. He was a Pharisee of the better sort, an earnest seeker after God ; and the truth uttered by those gracious lips touched his heart. " Of a truth, Teacher," he exclaimed, " you have spoken nobly ! There is one God, and ' there is none Dt. iv. 35.  
else beside Him ' ; and ' to love Him with all one's heart and with all one's understanding and with all one's might ' and ' to love one's neighbour as oneself ' is far more than all ' whole-burnt offerings I Sam. xv.  
and sacrifices.' " " You are not far from the 22.  
Kingdom of God," was our Lord's kindly reply. It was a gracious appeal to that seeking soul, and surely it would prevail.

Hitherto the rulers have been the assailants, but now that they have delivered this succession of attacks only to sustain in each instance a humiliating repulse,

our Lord assumes the offensive. He faces that group of Rabbis, professional interpreters of Holy Writ, and puts a question to them. "What think you of the Messiah? Whose son is He?" "David's" they replied. "Then," said He, quoting the hundred and tenth Psalm, "how is it that David in the Spirit calls Him 'lord,' saying:

"The Lord said to my lord, Sit at My right hand  
Until I make thy foes thy footstool? "

"My lord" was of old the reverential address of a son to his father, a younger brother to an elder, or a wife to her husband. "If then David calls Him 'lord,' how is He his son?"

Observe the argument. It is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the Rabbinical interpretation of that ancient scripture. Read without prejudice, the psalm is easily understood. It is the work of an unknown psalmist, celebrating the prowess of some king of Israel, the psalmist's "lord," who owed his triumph to the help of the Lord, the God of Israel. It is possible that the king was David, but the sequel points rather to a later period when the king was, "after the manner of Melchizedek," at once king and priest.

This is the plain meaning of the psalm, but the Scribes construed it otherwise. Impatient of anonymity, they placed every scripture under the shadow of some great name. This psalm, like most of "the praises of Israel," they ascribed to "the sweet psalmist of Israel," entitling it *A Psalm of David*; and they also regarded it as Messianic. David, as they conceived, sang prophetically of his Lord, that scion of his royal house who, according to

<sup>2</sup> Sam.  
xxiii. 1.

the promise, should arise as the King and Saviour of Israel. Thus they made two assumptions regarding the psalm, one false—that it was written by David, and the other true, though hardly in their sense—that it was written of the Messiah.

It is indeed a prophecy of the Coming Saviour, but here it is most needful to recognise what prophecy was. It was never mere prediction, "the history of events before they came to pass." As St. Chrysostom put it long ago, "the law of prophecy" is that it always had a double reference—a present and a future. The prophet was God's spokesman, proclaiming Cf. Ex. iv. to his contemporaries in time of distress a 16, vii. 1. message of good cheer, a radiant vision of God's purposes toward His people if only they proved faithful. It was a message for the hour, but the marvel is that it always transcended the immediate occasion and reached far beyond it. The holy men who spake from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, ever spoke more largely than either they or their hearers knew; and thus in all the ancient Scriptures there is not an ideal, a hope, or an aspiration which was not an anticipation, conscious or unconscious, of the Coming Saviour and which did not find in Him its final and complete realisation.

In this large sense that psalm was indeed prophetic of the Messiah, and the Scribes were right in so regarding it; but had they understood "the law of prophecy" they would have recognised that it had originally a present as well as a future reference, and they would then have perceived how impossible it is that David should have written it. And this our Lord brought home to them by His question: "Since the Messiah



is David's son, how is it that David styles Him ' my lord ' ? " For Jewish minds it was inconceivable that a father should so designate his son, and they could escape from the difficulty only by abandoning one or other of their assumptions regarding the psalm—either its Davidic authorship or its Messianic reference. Either would have involved an acknowledgment of error, and this in presence of the multitude would have been a dire humiliation for those learned interpreters of Holy Writ. At the moment they prudently kept silence, dissembling their discomfiture ; but it rankled in their minds, and afterwards, as the Talmud shows, they revised their interpretation, making the psalm refer not to the Messiah but to Abraham who, they supposed, after his conquest of the five kings  
Cf. Gen. xiv. was constituted " a priest for ever after the manner of Melchizedek." At the moment, however, they held their peace, and neither they nor the Sadducees ventured on a renewal of the controversy.

## THE FINAL APPEAL

Mt. xxiii. 1-7, 13-36 ; Mk. xii. 38-40 ; Lk. xx. 45-47, xi. 39-54.

Jo. xii. 20-50.

THUS ended the long controversy between our Lord and the rulers. Pharisees and Sadducees, they had sought by turns to " ensnare Him in argument " and put Him to confusion before the multitude, and they had been ignominiously worsted in each encounter. Last and heaviest of all was the humiliation which had overtaken the Scribes, and they would fain have retired from the scene ; but He was not done with them, and ere they could extricate themselves from the encompassing throng He assailed them with a stern indictment. It was indeed a stern indictment, surely the most terrible ever spoken ; yet it was no mere denunciation. Rather was it, as an ancient interpreter justly entitles it, " a commiseration of the Scribes and Pharisees." Its recurring apostrophe " Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, play-actors ! " is a cry of compassion ; and we miss its spirit and its purpose unless we catch the accent of pity quivering in its sternest sentences. In truth it is the Saviour's last appeal to His obdurate enemies, portraying their guilt and presaging its inevitable retribution in the hope that even yet they may repent.

First He addressed His attendant disciples and the thronging crowd. " Beware," said He, " of the Scribes. They are seated on Moses' chair : therefore all that they

tell you, do it and observe it ; but do not after their works." Surely a stinging censure ! As the official successors of Moses and the custodians of his Law, their office was venerable and their precepts authoritative ; but their character shamed their office and their practice belied their precepts. " What seemed to be their honour," says St. Chrysostom, " He makes their condemnation. For what can be more miserable than a teacher when it saves his disciples to pay no heed to his life ? " Was proof required ? It was there before all eyes. Look at those Rabbis in their flaunting robes. See how long they wear their tassels advertising their ceaseless meditation on the Sacred Law, and how broad their phylacteries, those strips of parchment inscribed with holy texts on their foreheads and left arms. Think how they claim the places of honour at feasts and the front seats in the synagogues and reverential salutations. They wear the guise of sanctity, but it is all a hollow pretence, mere play-acting.

" Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, play-actors ! " He cried, turning to those abashed dignitaries and casting in their teeth a succession of indignant charges. " You shut the Kingdom of Heaven in men's faces." They had blocked its approaches with their dead traditions ; they had choked the living fountain of the Word with the rubbish of their inventions, and every one who would have cleared it away they persecuted as an heretic. " You do not enter yourselves, nor those who are entering do you suffer to enter."

Yet they were zealous proselytisers. It was a triumph for them when they won converts from

heathenism, especially wealthy converts who enriched them with their offerings. But it was no triumph for the Kingdom of Heaven. For their converts abjured their heathenism only to learn worse villainy. "Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, play-actors! You scour sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice the son of Gehenna that you are." It was a heavy charge, but none too severe; for the Rabbis were experts in casuistry, rivalling the Jesuits whom Pascal satirises in his *Provincial Letters*. Throughout the ancient world an oath was held in exceeding reverence, and the Jews in those later days had acquired an evil reputation by their cunning evasions of its sacred obligation. It was their Rabbis that taught them the mischievous art. They distinguished between oaths which were binding and oaths which were not binding. If, for example, a Jew swore "by the gold of the Sanctuary," he brought his money within the consecrated category and it would have been sacrilege for him to deal dishonestly with it; but if he swore merely "by the Sanctuary," there was no such restraint. Similarly, unless he swore "by the offering upon the altar" and not merely "by the altar," his oath had no sanctity and he might repudiate his obligation. Or if he swore "by heaven," that might be construed as meaning merely "the sky," and so he was not bound unless he swore "by the Throne of God." So convenient a religion attracted knaves, and it is no wonder that proselytes had an ill name with decent Jews, who stigmatised them as "a scab on Israel." They brought shame on the race and its faith. A Jew's oath was everywhere distrusted. "You deny it," says the Latin epigrammatist, "and

swear by Thundering Jupiter. I don't believe you : swear, circumcised, *per Anchialum*"—meaning the Hebrew oath *'im hai 'elohim*, "as God liveth."

Such quibbles were characteristic of the Rabbis, who were ever scrupulous of the letter and regardless of the spirit. The Law claimed a tenth of all fruits Lev. xxvii. 30. in token of the consecration of one's entire possessions ; and the Rabbis fulfilled the requirement with punctilious exactitude, tithing their very pot-herbs. But in consecrating these they left their hearts unconsecrated. "Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, play-actors ! You tithe your mint and your anise and your cummin, and have let slip the Law's weightier requirements—judgment and mercy and fidelity. Blind guides !" He cries, hitting them off with a succession of familiar proverbs, "you that strain out the gnat and gulp down the camel. You cleanse the outside of the cup and the platter, while within they are full of rapacity and incontinence."

"Rapacity and incontinence"—truly a startling indictment, yet those "holy men" were guilty on both counts. History tells how in the dark pre-Reformation days, when a peasant died, the greedy priests invaded his poor cot and before the eyes of the weeping widow and orphans bore off their perquisites, the "cors presants"—his best cow and the coverlet of his bed.

"Quhen that he lyis for til de  
 Having small bairnis twa or thre,  
 And hes thre ky withoutin mo,  
 The vicar must have ane of tho,  
 With the gray cloke that happis the **bed**  
 Howbeit that he be purelye cled."

And the Rabbis rivalled the mediæval priests. "The stroke of the Pharisees has touched you" was the consolation administered by one Rabbi to a widow whom another had plundered. "Beware of the Scribes, who devour widows' houses and for a pretext make long prayers. Full and overflowing judgment will they receive." And of their incontinence hideous things are recorded. Suffice it to recall the story of Susanna and the Elders. "Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, play-actors! You resemble white-washed tombs." There was ceremonial defilement in contact with the dead, and lest men should touch them inadvertently, Jewish tombs were picked out in white, receiving a fresh coat at the close of the rainy season just before the Passover. "You resemble white-washed tombs, showing fair without but full within of dead men's bones and every sort of uncleanness."

On the shoulder of Mount Olivet, visible from the court of the Temple and gleaming in the sunshine as our Lord spoke, stood the Tombs of the Prophets, those monuments which the Jews of later days had reared to the sacred memory of the martyrs of old. He pointed thither. "Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, play-actors! You build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the sepulchres of the righteous; and you say: 'If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.'" It was an idle protestation; for while they deplored their fathers' crimes, were they not treating the prophets of their own day even as their fathers had treated the prophets of old? They were plotting the Lord's death, and they would persecute His Apostles after Him. "Fill you the measure of



your fathers. Serpents! brood of vipers! how are you to escape from the judgment of Gehenna? It is for this end, look you, that I am sending messengers to

Cf. Mt. xiii. 52. you, prophets and wise men and scribes, and some of them you will kill and crucify and some of them scourge in your synagogues and hunt from city to city—that on you may fall every drop of righteous blood ever shed on the earth from the

Gen. iv. 8. blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of Zechariah whom you slew between the

2 Chr. xxiv. 20-22. Sanctuary and the Altar.” There had indeed been many a martyr since Zechariah, that young priest who in the reign of Joash (836-797 B.C.) had protested against the apostasy of the king and princes and been stoned to death in the court of the House of the Lord; but the story is told toward the close of the second Book of Chronicles, and since that book stands last in the Hebrew Bible, “every drop of blood from Abel to Zechariah” means, in Jewish phrase, every impious crime recorded in Holy Scripture from the first page to the last. “Verily I tell you, all this will come on this generation.” And so it did. Many of our Lord’s hearers that day in the court of the Temple survived to witness the final tragedy, the siege of Jerusalem in the year 70, when the famished citizens stealing out in quest of food were captured and crucified about the city walls until, in the shuddering phrase of the Jewish historian, “room was lacking for the crosses and crosses for the bodies.”

The long day was wearing late as those solemn words fell on the ears of the Scribes and the awestricken multitude. It was the Lord’s last public discourse, and He was weary and sad. Eventide was approach-

ing, and it was time for Him to leave the city with the Twelve and seek their retreat on Mount Olivet ; but first it was necessary that they should procure food for their supper in Gethsemane, and Philip the purveyor with his friend Andrew went on this errand into the city, leaving the Master to rest in the Temple-court. As he went about his business, he was accosted by several strangers. They were Greeks or, as the word signified, Gentiles ; and what were they doing in Jerusalem ? They had come up, says the Evangelist, to worship at the Feast ; and, as we have already seen, it was nothing unusual at that period for Gentiles to participate in Jewish worship. It was a period of religious disintegration in the pagan world. The ancient mythology was the jest not merely of philosophers but of all intelligent men ; and the gods whom it had created, while still officially recognised, had no votaries save the credulous and superstitious multitude. And for this very reason it was, like every period of intellectual emancipation, a period of profound disquietude. "Thou hast made us for Thyself," says St. Augustine, "and our heart is restless until it find rest in Thee" ; and earnest souls in their hunger for God turned hither and thither for satisfaction. The mystic faiths of the East cast their spell on the western world, and it is no marvel that many seekers after God were attracted by the faith of Israel. In its lofty monotheism and its pure ethic they found somewhat of the satisfaction which they craved, but its ceremonial was distasteful to them. And thus, though they would not embrace it outright and confess themselves proselytes by submitting to the rite of circumcision, they joined in the worship of the synagogues and frequently

attended the great Feasts in the Temple, exhibiting an exemplary devotion and sometimes a lavish liberality.

Such were the good Centurion of Capernaum, that other Centurion, Cornelius of Cæsarea, and the Ethiopian Chamberlain. Neither Jews nor proselytes, they were distinguished as "fearers" or "worshippers of God"; and under this designation they figure largely in the Book of Acts.

Those Greeks who accosted Philip were "God-fearers," and like the Ethiopian Chamberlain they had come to Jerusalem to worship at the Feast. At home in their own country they had heard the fame of our Lord; and what they had heard of His teaching and His doings had stirred within them the thought that they might learn from Him the secret of that peace which they had in some measure found in the Jewish Faith. Perhaps it was the hope of meeting with Him that had brought them to the Feast. Since they did not travel with the Jewish pilgrims or mingle on their arrival with the Jewish throng, they had to make inquiry for Him. Philip was pointed out to them as one of His disciples, and so they accosted him. "Sir," said they, "we wish to see Jesus." He turned to his companion and told him of the request, and they conducted the strangers to the Temple-court and presented them to the Master.

Weary though He was and vexed by the dulness of the Jewish people and the hostility of their rulers, He gladly received them. Their coming was indeed opportune. A moment ago it had seemed as though His ministry were closing in failure, and when those Gentiles appeared before Him eager to hear the message

which Jerusalem had scorned, He recognised in them the forerunners of that great multitude from every nation and people who would yet believe in His name, those other sheep that would hear His voice and be gathered into His fold. He bade them welcome and sat communing with them, listening to their questions and presenting to them the truths of His evangel. There is no detailed record of His discourse, since it was a novel and unexpected incident, taking the disciples by surprise; but the Evangelist has noted his recollection of it. It is not a report but a bare outline, and in indication hereof he has not incorporated it with the narrative but, as a modern author would have made it a footnote, so he has appended it at the close. One thing, however, he vividly remembered—the tone and bearing of the Master. “Jesus,” he has written, “cried and said”—a frequent phrase of his, expressive, as he employed it, of strong emotion. And what were the truths which the Lord thus proclaimed? His divine mission and His oneness with God; the illumination which His message brings to the soul that believes it; the responsibility which the hearing of it entails; the loss of rejecting it and the eternal bliss of receiving it. Jo. x. 16.  
xii. 44-50.

His appeal awoke in those earnest souls a response which filled His heart with exultant gladness. It was a triumph in the hour of seeming failure and a foretaste and pledge of a larger triumph still. “The hour has come,” said He to His attendant disciples, “for the Son of Man to be glorified.” It was not the glory which they, with their Jewish ideal of an earthly throne, were dreaming of. What awaited Him was a cruel and shameful death, but this, little as they

knew it at the moment, was the pathway to glory. For is it not from the dying of the seed that the rich harvest springs? Is it not by the sacrifice of his life that the hero wins immortal honour and the triumph of his cause? That was the pathway which the Lord must tread and which His disciples must tread after Him.

Here suddenly He falters. The horror of the impending ordeal rose before Him, and the question presented itself whether it were indeed inevitable. Was there not an easier way? Once, at the Feast of Tabernacles when He was reasoning with the rulers Cf. Jo. vii. 33-35. there in the Temple-court, He had warned them that the time was short and He would soon leave them; and they had supposed that He meant to forsake the obdurate Jews and betake Himself to the Gentiles. And now, in view of the responsiveness of those Greeks, the idea recurs to Him. He was the Saviour of the world and not of Israel alone, and why should He stay in Jerusalem and suffer that cruel death when the myriads of heathendom were hungering for God and would surely welcome His message? "Now is My soul troubled, and what am I to say? Father," He cried, "save Me from this hour!" But immediately He dismissed the thought. It was His Father's will that He should die, according to the Scriptures, a sacrifice for the sin of the world. All His days He had been treading the pathway to the Cross, and He would not now turn aside and seek a smoother road. Hitherto He had sought only His Father's will, and He would seek it to the last. "Nay, it was for this that I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name."

Thus once more by resignation to His Father's will He conquered His human weakness and addressed Himself to the completion of His appointed task. It was truly a momentous decision, involving the world's destiny; and what wonder that, even as at His Baptism in the Jordan as He entered on His mission, so now at its close the silence was broken by a voice from Heaven? "Father," He had prayed, "glorify Thy name"; and the answer came: "I have glorified it and again will I glorify it." It was no mere voice within; for the people who thronged about Him heard it and wondered at it. The more remote could not distinguish the words and took it for thunder; but those who were near heard it plainly and took it for the voice of a ministering angel. But He knew Whose voice it was and wherefore He had spoken. It was more than a cheering assurance of His Father's approval. Had that been all, no articulate voice would have been needed: a voice within would have sufficed. "It is not," said He, "for My sake that this voice has come but for yours." It was not merely, like the voice by the Jordan at the beginning of His ministry, an attestation of His Messiahship but a proclamation of the triumph which He would presently achieve by His sacrificial death. That was the supreme crisis of human history—God's arraignment of the power of evil, His dethronement of its long tyranny, and His enthronement of redeeming grace. "Now is this world's assize; now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." Thus by the seeming tragedy of His

Mt. iii. 17;

Mk. i. 11;

Lk. iii. 22.



lifting up on the Cross would the Son of Man be glorified.

Even for the disciples it was as yet a dark saying, and it perplexed the multitude. It seemed to them as though He were speaking in a double character. On the one hand, He claimed to be the Messiah, "the Son of God," and His claim had in their judgment been signally attested first by His triumphant controversies with the rulers and then by the heavenly voice. But now He styles Himself "the Son of Man," and speaks not merely of the Son of Man being "glorified" but of His being "lifted up from the earth." It was this latter phrase that puzzled them. They had understood that by "the Son of Man" He meant Himself, and had He spoken merely of the Son of Man being "glorified," they would have felt no difficulty; but what could He mean by "the Son of Man being lifted up"? The phrase plainly signified His removal; and was it not written in that psalm which He had quoted in their hearing a little ago and in other scriptures that "the Messiah remains for ever"? "We have heard from the Law," they exclaimed in bewilderment, "that the Messiah remains for ever; and how say you that 'the Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"

He did not stay to resolve their perplexity. The shadows of evening were falling, and it was time for Him to seek His retreat on Olivet; and soon His meaning would be discovered by the progress of events. "A little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that the darkness may not overtake you. While you have the light, believe

Ps. cx. 4;

cf. Ps.

lxxxix. 36;

Is. ix. 7;

Dan. vii.

14.

in the light, that you may become sons of light." Therewith He "went away and was hidden from them." They watched Him retreating with the Twelve amid the gathering gloom, and it was the last they saw of Him till they saw Him lifted on the Cross.

## THE TRAVAIL-PANGS OF A NEW CREATION

Mt. xxiv (x. 17-23), xxv ; Mk. xiii ; Lk. xxi. 5-36, xii. 35-38.

IF the experience of that eventful day had invested the Master with fresh wonder in the eyes of His disciples, it had also accentuated the uneasy foreboding which had of late been oppressing them. They had witnessed His sharp encounters with the rulers and heard His indignant indictment of the Scribes ; and they perceived the inevitable issue. Those proud men would never rest until they had their revenge ; and, knowing how powerful they were, they recognised the certainty of His destruction. They followed Him in silence till they had passed from the sacred precincts ; and then, as they surveyed the Temple, that magnificent pile which the ambition of King Herod had built of huge blocks of gleaming marble inlaid with gold, their hearts sank within them. They felt how small they were and how helpless against a power thus enthroned. "Teacher," one of them exclaimed, "see what manner of stones and what manner of buildings !" "You are looking at these great buildings ?" He calmly answered. "Verily I tell you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another which will not be pulled down."

They would understand what He meant, since already they had heard from His lips forewarnings of the doom which was impending over the turbulent city

and which the rulers themselves apprehended. They said nothing at the moment, but by and by as they sat in the Garden ere lying down to sleep the favoured three and Peter's brother Andrew, who had latterly shared their peculiar intimacy with the Master, craved fuller information.

Cf. Lk. xix.  
41-44; Mt.  
xxi. 41,  
xxiii. 35.  
Jo. xi. 48.

"Tell us, when will this be? And what will be the sign when it is all about to be accomplished?" It was no idle question. Surely they had need of counsel in prospect of so terrible a catastrophe; and He responded to their entreaty, and there in the stillness of the orchard discoursed to them of the ordeal which awaited them after His departure.

His theme was twofold: the immediate catastrophe which happened some forty years later when Jerusalem fell before the army of Titus, and that final consummation, still unaccomplished—His glorious reappearing; and that we may truly appreciate what is here written, two facts should be considered.

(1) It was difficult for the disciples, whom the Master had so often to upbraid for their slowness in understanding even His simplest teaching, to comprehend His discourse on themes so transcendent and remote from their experience and expectation; and their subsequent report could be but meagre—not His full discourse but merely so much as clung to their remembrance. And this was all the material

that the Evangelists possessed. How did they deal with it? St. Matthew's is the fullest report, and it is significant that it includes two passages which St. Luke assigns to other occasions. Here their method is revealed. Our Lord, especially in the later days of

Cf. Mt.  
xxiv. 23-  
28, 37-40  
with Lk.  
xvii. 20-  
37, and Mt.  
xxiv. 43-51  
with Lk.  
xii. 39-46.

His ministry, frequently spoke of things to come, and many of His sayings lived in His disciples' memories and were repeated by them after He was gone. And when the Evangelists told the story of that solemn night on Mount Olivet, they eked out the disciples' meagre reminiscences of His discourse with other appropriate fragments.

(2) It was a legitimate method, but in its application their perspective was confused by an erroneous expectation which arose in the Church after the Lord's departure and, as appears in St. Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians, occasioned much trouble. In spite of

Mt. xxiv. 38; Ac. i. 7. His frequent and explicit intimations that the time of His return was hidden in God's secret council and, since the operation of His pur-

Cf. Mt. xiii. 24-33. poses is ever patient and gradual, was likely to be long delayed, the first generation of believers, impatient of abounding iniquity and eager for the speedy triumph of His Kingdom, looked for His return within their own lifetime. The Evangelists shared this expectation, and it warped their judgment in arranging His scattered intimations of the future ordeal. They foreshortened the perspective of events,

Mt. xxiv. 29; Mk. xiii. 24. setting the final consummation of His return hard after the imminent catastrophe of the city's destruction. This is a natural and indeed inevitable consequence of their erroneous pre-

Mt. xxiv. 6-8, 14; Mk. xiii. 7-10; Lk. xxi. 9; Mt. xxv. 5. supposition; yet such was their fidelity to the evangelic tradition that they have in the same breath reported sayings of His which contradict it and prove what His teaching actually was.

He began with the immediate catastrophe which His

disciples in the course of nature would live to witness. Not only was it very grievous to Jewish hearts that the city of their fathers and their fathers' God must perish, but who could tell what distress and suffering were in store? The prospect was indeed dark, and He tells them that their worst forebodings would be more than realised. The ruin of Jerusalem was but an incident in a worldwide tragedy; for the wild fanaticism which their revolutionary ideal of a Messianic Kingdom had enkindled in Jewish breasts and which, as Josephus justly observes, directly precipitated the national disaster, was only a phase of that restless spirit which possessed the nations in those troublous days and must issue in universal commotion and calamity.

But what did it all mean? Here the Lord speaks a great word of reassurance. "See," says He, "you be not affrighted. All this is but the beginning of travail-pangs." The epigram expresses the Christian philosophy of history. Beneath all the seeming confusion of the world lies the sovereign will of Almighty God ever working out its invincible purpose of goodness and mercy and creating a higher and nobler order; and the sufferings and sorrows of humanity are in truth but the birth-pangs of a better world. At the moment only the confusion appears, but by and by, looking back, we perceive how, in the language of Holy Writ, God's shaking of the earth has ever signified the removing of those things that are shaken Heb. xii.  
26-28. that the things which are not shaken may remain.

And here lay the disciples' high vocation and a challenge to their faith and courage. Jerusalem was the cradle of the Church, and would the Gospel perish with her destruction? Surely it would if it remained



there ; but it was not to remain there. The disciples were the Lord's Apostles, and their task was to bear abroad the message of His salvation and proclaim it far and wide, that when Jerusalem fell, it might still prosper on other and larger fields. It was a mighty task, and the time was short ; but there was time enough for its achievement if only, as they would, they devoted themselves to it with steadfast hearts, fearless of peril and persecution. " This Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed all over the world for a testimony to all the nations ; and then will come the end." And so indeed it came to pass. The tragic end

Rom. xv. 19. was still fourteen years off when the Apostle

of the Gentiles wrote that " from Jerusalem and all round as far as Illyricum he had accomplished the preaching of the Gospel of the Christ."

The fall of Jerusalem was the end of the Jewish state and Israel's historic position as God's peculiar people and His witness among the nations, but it was not the end of all things. It was " the beginning of travail-pangs," a fresh departure in the working out of the agelong purpose of redemption, that divine purpose which will attain its triumph when our Lord appears in glory to judge the world and establish His Kingdom. Of this final consummation He now speaks, employing the familiar imagery of the prophetic scriptures ; and in view of the natural curiosity of His disciples and the impatience wherewith they would surely expect it amid the impending distress and their discouragement at the tardiness of their deliverance, He addresses to them a double admonition. First He tells them with explicit emphasis that the time of that supreme consummation was hidden in

God's secret council, even from Himself meanwhile in His state of humiliation. "Of that day and hour none knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor even the Son, but the Father alone." It might be soon, but the likelihood was rather that it would be long delayed; and it is remarkable, proving how emphatically He spoke here, that, imperfectly as they and their contemporaries appreciated it, the Evangelists were in no wise oblivious of this intimation. They tell how He warned His disciples at once against impatience and against the negligence which comes of hope deferred; and St. Matthew, with his peculiar care in the preservation of our Lord's teaching, has recorded, as spoken on that memorable night, two unforgettable parables, enforcing especially the latter warning.

The first is the parable of the Ten Virgins. Here the Lord tells the story of a wedding-feast like the one at Cana which He and His earliest disciples had attended at the beginning of His ministry. It was held, according to custom, after nightfall in the house of the bride's parents; and ten maidens, the bride's friends, went out betimes with lighted lamps to meet the bridegroom and escort him thither. Evidently his home was out in the country, and they betook themselves to the city-gate and awaited him there. By some mischance he was detained. Hour after hour passed, and as they sat waiting in the porch, they grew drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the porter awakened them. "Here is the bridegroom!" he cried. "Go out to meet him." They started up and found that, while they slept, their lamps had burned low. Five of them had brought their oil-flasks with them and they replenished their lamps, but

the others had made no provision. "Give us some of your oil" they begged. "Our lamps are going out." "There won't be enough for us and you" was the answer. "Go and buy some for yourselves." It was difficult to procure oil at that untimeous hour, and ere they returned the bridegroom had passed with their companions in his train. They hastened after them only to find that the feast had begun. It was the bridegroom that gave the wedding feast, and when they knocked at the closed door, it was he that answered. "Sir, sir," they cried, "open to us!" But he refused, taking them for intrusive strangers. "I tell you, I do not know you."

The parable is a picture of the coming of the Heavenly Bridegroom to claim His blood-bought Bride; and the

lesson which our Lord here inculcates on His disciples is that, since they know not when He may come, it behoves them to be always ready, lest they be taken by surprise. What was the difference between those maidens? Had the bridegroom come betimes, they would all have greeted him joyfully and accompanied him to the feast; but he tarried, and it was his tarrying that made the difference. And thus will it be on that great day when the Lord will appear. Even as all the maidens "drowsed and fell asleep," it may be, nay it must be, that His coming will take us by surprise; but what manner of surprise will it be? It is told of that beautiful man of God, St. Francis de Sales, that once he was found by an austere brother sitting with a child beside him. The little lad had laid his chess-board on the saint's knee and was playing a game with him. The intruder was shocked. "Brother

Eph. v. 25-  
27; Rev.  
xix. 7-9.

Francis," he remonstrated, "what if the Lord should appear and find you at play with a foolish child?" "My brother," was the answer, "I would finish the game: it was for His glory that I began it." Here is the test whether we be ready for His appearing: Are we living continually as in the light of His holy and blessed Face? Wherever we may be and whatever our employment, be it worship or business or pleasure, could we, if He were suddenly manifested in our midst, rise without shame or confusion and bid Him a joyful welcome? "In whatsoever employments I may surprise you," is one of His unwritten sayings, "in these will I judge you." Well for us in that solemn and inevitable hour if there be within us a deep, full fountain of faith and love. Then His coming may surprise us, but it will in no wise dismay us.

Against impatience and discouragement there is a sovereign remedy; and this the Lord shows His disciples in a second parable. He tells how a merchant had occasion to travel abroad, and that his affairs might prosper during his absence he committed the management of them to three of his slaves—"his own slaves," says our Lord, meaning the three whom he had kept about him in his business and deemed best qualified. According to his judgment of their abilities he entrusted one of them with five talents (approximately £1000), another with two (£400), and the third with one (£200), "each according to his peculiar ability," and charged them to trade with his money till he returned. Pleased with their master's confidence the first and second set blithely to work and traded diligently and successfully. But what of the third? The comparative insignificance of his

trust aggrieved him, and he thought bitterly of his master. Why should he take trouble for one who had so slighted him, a greedy tyrant whom there was no satisfying? A rascal might have made off with the money, but he was no rascal. He would not trade with his trust, but he would restore it intact. And what should he do with it meanwhile? After the old-world fashion he dug a hole in the ground and buried it there.

The master was a long time away; and his return was celebrated by a joyous banquet. He was anxious to learn how his affairs had gone in his absence, and while the table was being spread he interviewed the three slaves and called them to account. The first told him proudly that he had doubled the £1000. "Well done, my good and faithful slave!" cried the master. "You have been faithful to a small trust: I will appoint you to a large one. Come you to your master's feast." The second reported that he too had doubled his capital, and produced £800. "Well done, my good and faithful slave!" cried the master again. "You have been faithful to a small trust: I will appoint you to a large one. Come you to your master's feast." The third was standing by, and his fellows' achievements and the commendation which they had won rebuked his negligence and his misjudgment of so generous a master; but regret was now unavailing, and he tried to brazen it out. "Master," said he, producing the £200, "I had learned that you are a hard man, 'reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not scatter'; and I was afraid and went and hid your £200 in the earth. See! you have your own."

It was an insolent speech, and it was untrue. The fellow asserted his honesty, but he had really defrauded his master by letting his money lie idle. If he would not trade with it himself, he should have handed it over to others who would. "You wicked slave and slothful!" said the indignant master. "You knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter? Then you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and now that I have come I would have got 'my own' and interest with it." There was no place for him at the feast that night. "Take the £200 from him and give them to the man with the £1000; and expel the useless slave into the outer darkness."

Here our Lord shows His disciples how they should prepare to meet Him when He comes again. There was work for them to do, and that work was the trust which He committed to them; and their ambition should be that, when He came, whether soon or late, they should be found faithful. And see how nobly He encourages them. Opportunity is the measure of responsibility, and faithfulness the measure of reward. The master proportioned each slave's trust to "his peculiar ability." The first received £1000, and the second, because his ability was less, only £400; but with their differing abilities they displayed an equal diligence, and they were equally rewarded. And had the third been equally diligent in the discharge of his lesser trust, he would have been equally rewarded; nay, had he displayed a larger diligence, his reward would have been the greatest of all. And see what their reward was. It is a saying of Rabbi Simeon ben Azzai that "the reward of a commandment is a



commandment," signifying that faithfulness brings ever a larger opportunity and one duty well performed opens another. The Master's reward of faithful service is the privilege of serving Him more. And therefore the neglected trust of the unfaithful slave passed to his neighbour who had proved his pre-eminent ability.

There was a problem which could not but present itself to the minds of the disciples as the Lord thus discoursed. As it concerned them and those who like them should hear His word and accept His trust, the justice of His final reckoning was unchallengeable ; but what of those who should remain strangers to Him and His Gospel ? What of the myriads of heathendom ? Would they be accounted, as the Rabbis taught, mere "fuel for Gehenna," doomed for not believing in a Saviour whom they had never known and not obeying a command which they had never heard ? Perhaps the disciples raised the question. At all events it must have been in their minds, and,

expressed or unexpressed, He now answers it by setting before them, in the familiar imagery of the prophetic Scriptures, a picture of the Last Assize—the judgment, be it observed, not of "all nations," as our old Version has it, but of "all the nations," the scriptural designation of the heathen world. "When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all His angels with Him, then will He sit upon the throne of His glory, and all the nations will be assembled before Him." At this solemn tribunal such and only such will be arraigned as have never seen the Saviour's face or heard His name ; and it will be for them a day of surprise,

Cf. Zech.  
xiv. 5 ;  
Dan. vii.  
13 ; Joel  
iii.

Cf. vers.

37-39, 44.

revealing to them spiritual relationships and eternal issues all undreamed of. As at the close of day the sheep and the goats which have mingled on the mountainside will be folded apart, so will the kingly Judge marshal the throng on His right hand and His left and pronounce their several destinies. "Come, My Father's blessed ones," He will say to those on His right, "inherit the Kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. I was hungry and you gave Me meat; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you harboured Me, naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." Yet never till that hour had they seen His face. "Sir," they will exclaim, "when did we see you so bested and so befriend you?" And He will point to the poor souls whom they have succoured in distress. "Verily I tell you, forasmuch as you did it to one of these My brothers, so insignificant, it was to Me that you did it." And so to the assemblage on His left: "Away from Me, accursed! Forasmuch as you did it not to these, it was to Me that you did it not."

Here our Lord enunciates a profound truth which, little as the disciples may have understood it at the moment, was afterwards revealed to them by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Even as in the days of His flesh, so evermore in His glory our Lord is the Lover of men, especially those whose need is great; and since love is vicarious, there is not a human joy or sorrow which He does not share. Hence whatever we do to our fellow-men, we do to Him; and every one, even though he never heard the Saviour's name, who

loves his brother and ministers to his need, is loving Him and serving Him.

“ Still wheresoever pity shares  
Its bread with sorrow, want, and sin,  
And love the beggar's feast prepares,  
The uninvited guest comes in.

“ Unheard, because our ears are dull,  
Unseen, because our eyes are dim,  
He walks our earth, The Wonderful,  
And all good deeds are done to Him.”

“ Forasmuch as you did it to one of these, it was to Me that you did it.”

This will be the final test for those who have never known the Saviour here. For those who have known Him and heard His Gospel, the question will be whether they have believed it. And in truth there is no difference ; for not only is a Christlike love in those who never knew Him an evidence that had they heard His Gospel they would have believed it, but its lack in those who know Him and profess faith in

1 Jo. iv. 20, 21. Him gives the lie to their profession. And so it is written : “ If one say, ‘ I love God,’ and hate his brother, he is a liar. For one who loves not his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment have we from Him, that one who loves God love his brother too.”

## THE LAST SUPPER

Mt. xxvi. 1-5, 14-19; Mk. xiv. 1, 2, 10-16; Lk. xxii. 1-13. Mt. xxvi. 20-35; Mk. xiv. 17-31; Lk. xxii. 14-24, 27-38 (1 Cor. xi. 23-25); Jo. xiii, xiv.

WHILE the Lord was thus discoursing to His disciples on Mount Olivet, the train had been laid for His destruction. Humiliated by the ill success of their encounters with Him in the Temple-court and exasperated by His stinging indictment, the rulers had retired in hot indignation and had met to plot their revenge. It was not a regular meeting of the Sanhedrin, though they, the Chief Priests and the Scribes, were its members; for that would have attracted attention, and they had stealthy work to do. Their rendezvous was not the Hall of Hewn Stone (*lishkath haggazith*), the official chamber of the high court within the sacred precincts, but the residence of Caiaphas, the acting Chief Priest. There was no room within doors in a private residence for so large a company, Mt. xxvi. 3 and they congregated in the courtyard, the R.V. spacious area round which, after the oriental fashion, the house was built, and there talked over the situation. They were unanimous in their resolution to arrest Jesus and put Him to death; but here they were confronted by the old difficulty that He was the hero of the populace and His molestation would excite a tumult, always a serious affair in an eastern city. Reluctantly they recognised that they must postpone

their revenge until the Feast was over and by the departure of the multitude of worshippers from abroad the city had been restored to its normal quietude.

Just then a welcome opportunity for immediate action presented itself. The gate opened and a visitor entered the courtyard. It was Judas the Man of Kerioth. What had brought him thither? The Master's rebuke of his protest against Mary's loving extravagance last Sunday evening during the supper at Bethany had ever since been rankling in his miserable mind; and observing the subsequent trend of events and the inevitable issue, he had realised the vanity of his fond dream of an earthly kingdom. He had espoused the Lord's cause in anticipation of wealth and honour when it prevailed; and now, assured of its defeat and goaded by resentment, he had decided to abandon the disastrous adventure on the best terms obtainable. He knew the deadly purpose of the rulers and what held their hands; and, probably while the Master was employed with the Greeks, he stole away to the Chief Priest and, finding him there in the courtyard conferring with his colleagues, introduced himself as a disciple of their adversary and proposed, if they would make it worth his while, to observe His movements and apprise them when they had an opportunity for quietly effecting His arrest. It was an infamous proposal, and even while they clutched at it the rulers scorned the wretch who made it.

Cf. Ex. xxi. 32. They offered him thirty shekels of silver. It was the price of a slave, and he accepted it, rating thus cheaply not his Master but his own honour.

“ Still, as of old,  
Man by himself is priced.  
For thirty pieces Judas sold  
Himself, not Christ.”

They felt the degradation of the transaction and, desiring to have done with him, they paid down the money on the spot; and he hastened to rejoin his comrades and sat with them that night in Gethsemane, listening to the Master's discourse.

That evening's sunset, according to the Jewish reckoning, ushered in the Thursday of the Holy Week, the day of preparation for the paschal supper when the viands were procured and the table spread. They had no lodging in Jerusalem, and when they awoke in the morning, the disciples asked the Lord where He intended that they should eat the Passover that evening. Though He had told them nothing, He had already arranged it all. A friend in the city had promised Him the use of a room. Who it was that rendered Him this service is unrecorded, but from the ensuing narrative it seems most probable that it was Mary, that widow lady who dwelt in Jerusalem with her son John Mark, afterwards Ac. xii. 12. the Evangelist, and who subsequently, with characteristic hospitality, entertained the Apostles in her comfortable abode. Why had He not told the disciples of the arrangement? The reason is that not only did He know how the rulers' eyes were upon Him eagerly watching for an opportunity to arrest Cf. Jo. vi. 70, 71. Him but He had long been cognisant of the disaffection smouldering in the heart of Judas, and perhaps He had surmised his errand when he stole away from the Temple-court the previous afternoon.



When every family was within doors engaged in the holy celebration, the streets of the city would be deserted, and were it known to the rulers where He was eating the Passover with His disciples, it would be easy for them to send their officers thither and quietly effect His arrest. He recognised indeed that

L.K. xxii.  
15. His doom was sealed and could not be long delayed, but He would fain eat the Passover

with His faithful followers and enjoy a last season of communion with them ere He suffered.

Therefore had He kept the secret ; and even now when He must needs reveal it, see how He still guards it. He chose Peter and John, the most trusted of His disciples, and despatched them on the errand of preparing the supper ; but He did not tell them plainly whither they should go. " Away to the city," said He, " and there will meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water. Follow him. And wherever he enters, say to the master of the house : ' The Teacher says, *Where is the guest-chamber where I am to eat the Passover with My disciples ?* ' And he will show you a large upper room furnished with couches. There make ready." So He had arranged it with His friends in the city. He had confided in them, and they had undertaken to have a man-servant in waiting that morning at the city-gate with a pitcher of water. It was women that went to the well with pitchers, and a man with a pitcher was unusual. He would at once catch the eyes of the two disciples, and on their accosting him he would conduct them to the house. And that there might be no mistake a password had been agreed upon. They were to say to the master of the house : " The Teacher says, ' Where is the

guest-chamber? ' ' and so he would recognise them and admit them.

Thus the secret was guarded. Judas was present while Peter and John received their instructions; and though he fain would, yet with the Lord's eye upon him he durst not follow them and discover the rendezvous.

The Paschal Supper was a commemoration of the Exodus; and year by year for full fifteen centuries it had been celebrated after the exemplar of that supper which, by the command of Moses, had

Ex. xii.

been eaten in every household on the memorable night when the Lord brought forth His oppressed people from the land of bondage. The food that night had been the flesh of a lamb and bread, and it had been hastily prepared and hastily eaten. The flesh was roasted and the bread unleavened, and they ate the meal with their loins girt, their sandals on their feet, and staff in hand. And after this pattern was the memorial supper celebrated. The table was furnished with the roasted flesh of a lamb which had been slain at the altar in the Temple-court, and with unleavened bread, and moreover with bitter herbs symbolic of the bitterness of the Egyptian bondage, and the *charoseth*, a paste of dry fruits grated and moistened with vinegar, representing the clay wherewith the bondsmen had made bricks for their taskmasters.

It would be evening ere Peter and John had prepared all this; and presently they were joined by the Master and their ten fellows. It was the Jewish custom that when guests assembled they were received by a slave who took off their sandals and laved their feet in cool water; and though the necessity of privacy prevented the hospitality which had furnished the room from

providing also an attendant, a basin and a towel and a jar of water had been set in readiness in the expectation that one of the Twelve would perform the service for the Master and the rest. These met the eyes of the disciples as they entered, and they looked at each other and whisperingly debated which of them should discharge the menial office. It is a pathetic evidence of the hold which the Jewish conception of the Messianic Kingdom still had of their minds that they were still concerned with the question which of them should be the greatest. None of them would undertake it lest he should thereby prejudice his claim, and they took their places at the table with unwashed feet.

The Master had observed their heated colloquy, and it had grieved Him ; but at the moment He took no notice. He proceeded to dispense the supper. According to the stated order it began with the drinking of a cup of wine. The reason which prescribed that the bread should be unleavened, being baked in haste, required also that the wine should be the sort in common use ; and since no fewer than four full cups were drained by each guest in the course of the celebration, the rule was that "for the avoidance of intoxication" the wine should be mixed with water, though not so largely as to lose "the appearance and flavour of wine." Its mixing in the bowl was the prelude to the supper, and the Lord's heart was full as He performed it. During these troublous days the disciples had remarked a peculiar tenderness in His bearing toward them. "Before the  
Jo. xiii. 1. Feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come to pass out of this world to the Father, much as He had loved His own who were in the

world, now loved them "not "to the end" but "to the utmost—loved them as He had never done before." It was the tenderness of approaching departure, and as He mixed the wine, His heart overflowed. He had been looking forward to that hour of peaceful communion, and now it had come. "Eagerly have I desired to eat this Passover with you ere I suffer." It was the last time He would ever recline with them at an earthly table, but one day, He tells them, they would meet again. For that earthly supper was a symbol and a prophecy of the Heavenly Feast, and in bidding them farewell He was going before them to the Father's House to prepare a better table and furnish it with a nobler provision against their arrival. "Eagerly have I desired to eat this Passover with you ere I suffer; for I tell you that I will no more eat it until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God."

Here He blessed the wine which He had mixed according to the prescribed formula: "Blessed be He who created the fruit of the vine"; and then He took a cup, His own cup, and filled it and, passing the bowl round, bade them fill their cups too. "Take this," said He, "and share it among you. For I tell you that I shall never hereafter drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it with you new in the Kingdom of My Father."

After the drinking of this the first cup the dishes were produced—the flesh of the lamb carved ready for use, the cakes of unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, and the *charoseth*. Another thanksgiving was pronounced: "Blessed be He who created the fruit of the earth," and each took a cluster of the bitter herbs, dipped it in the *charoseth*, and ate it.

Again the bowl went round, and after this the second cup the custom according to the ancient institution Cf. Ex. xii. 26, 27. was that one of the company, properly the youngest of the family, should put the question: "What mean ye by this service?" and the head of the house answered by discoursing thus of its origin and significance: "This is the Passover which we eat, forasmuch as God 'passed over' the houses of our fathers in Egypt. These bitter herbs we eat, forasmuch as the Egyptians embittered the lives of our fathers in Egypt. This unleavened bread we eat, forasmuch as there was no time for the sprinkled flour of our fathers to be leavened ere God revealed Himself and redeemed them. Therefore ought we to praise, celebrate, and honour Him who did all these wondrous things for our fathers and for us, and brought you forth from bondage into liberty, from sorrow into joy, from darkness into great light. Therefore let us say 'Hallelujah.'"

This was the signal for the singing of the First Hallel ("Praise")—Psalms cxiii and cxiv, but here the Lord introduced a startling innovation. For the customary explanation of the supper He substituted an acted parable. Doubtless the disciples had forgotten the quarrel which they had on entering the room. They had never meant the Master to know of it, and from His silence it seemed that it had escaped His notice. But He had observed it, and now He administers to them an impressive reproof. He rose from His couch and, putting off His loose cloak, stepped to the door, fastened the long towel about His waist, poured water into the basin, and bore it back to the table. His intention was plain. He was

about to perform for the disciples that menial office which they had all disdained. He began with Peter. "Lord," exclaimed the latter, "*you wash my feet?*" "What I am doing," was the answer, "you do not know at present, but you will learn afterwards." "Never," asseverated Peter, "will you wash my feet—never!" "Unless I wash you," was the reply, "you have no part with Me." He meant that Peter, who had no doubt been the hottest in the quarrel, had sore need of the lesson which He would presently unfold; and Peter immediately submitted. "Lord," he cried, "not my feet only but also my hands and my head." It was Peter's way to leap thus from one extreme to another; and the Master smiled at his characteristic impetuosity. "One who has been bathed," said He playfully, "has need merely to wash his feet: he is clean all over." He meant that He was not charging Peter with utter unregeneracy. He had indeed been bathed in the "laver of regeneration," and all that he required was cleansing from the dust of daily defilement. And this that was true of Peter was true of them all with a single exception. "One who has been bathed has need merely to wash his feet: he is clean all over; and," He added sorrowfully, looking round the circle, "you are clean, but not all." The eleven would wonder what He meant, but Judas understood. It showed him that his villainy was detected, and he would fain have retired. That was the Lord's intention, but it would have been an open confession, and this he durst not face. He kept his place and, hiding his guilty discomfiture, let the Master wash his feet in his turn.

Tit. iii. 5  
marg.



When He had completed His task, the Lord returned to His couch and expounded to His shamefast disciples the lesson which He had thus enacted. "You understand what I have done to you? You call Me 'the Teacher' and 'the Lord,' and you say well; for so I am. If then I have washed your feet, I the Lord and the Teacher, you too ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you may do as I have done to you." Far other this than their Jewish dream of a restored Kingdom of Israel where the Master whom they had followed in His obscurity would reign with a glory surpassing David's or Solomon's, and where each of them was hoping for the office of His Grand Vizier. In truth they would not lose their reward. There was a glory in store for them—not the glory which they imagined but an infinitely nobler, the glory which is reached by the path of service and sacrifice. "Which is greater—the guest at table or the servant who waits upon him? Is it not the guest? Yet I am as the servant among you. You it is that have stood by Me amid My trials, and I am assigning you, as My Father has assigned Me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." It was their Master's way that they were called to tread and His glory that they would inherit; and what better could they desire? "If you know this, blessed are you if you do it."

Indeed His acted parable hardly required interpretation. It was a plain comment on their unseemly contention, and it would be all the plainer since in those days "doing a thing with unwashed feet" was a

proverb for the presumption of a novice who "exercises himself in great matters and in things too high for him." It would inevitably leap into their minds, and it would point the Master's lesson. They had been disputing which of them would be greatest in His Kingdom, oblivious that a spirit of selfish ambition was alien from His Kingdom and while they cherished it they "had no part with Him" at all.

When He had thus discoursed, they sang the First Hallel, and surely they would recognise a new significance in the familiar strain :

"Who is as the Lord our God ?

Ps. cxiii. 5,  
6 LXX.

He that dwelleth on high,

He that looketh upon the lowly things  
in the heaven and in the earth."

Then the bowl went round, and they filled their cups ; and the drinking of this the third cup was followed by a solemn observance introductory to the eating of the flesh of the lamb, which was the actual feast of the Passover, all that preceded being merely preliminary. They washed their hands, and the master of the household took two unleavened cakes and, breaking one and placing the pieces on the other, thus offered thanks : "Blessed be He who bringeth forth bread from the earth." Then he wreathed the broken bread with bitter herbs, dipped it in the *charoseth*, and with this further thanksgiving : "Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, the King Eternal, who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments and commanded us to eat," ate the bitter morsels.

More bitter than their taste was the thought that was in His heart. It was impossible for Him to

commune as He would with the faithful eleven in the traitor's presence. His removal was imperative, but how could it be effected without frustrating the supreme end? An open dismissal would have been a disclosure of his villainy and would have excited in his comrades' breasts a storm of indignation. Already as He washed their feet the Lord had given him a hint that he should quietly withdraw; but he had ignored it, and He now gives him another more emphatic. "Verily, verily," said He, "I tell you that one of you will betray Me."

The announcement fell like a thunderbolt on their ears. They looked aghast at each other, and it proves how humbled they were by the thought of their behaviour at the outset and the Master's subsequent rebuke that instead of suspecting one another each suspected himself and exclaimed "Can it be I?" The question was on every lip, and to cover his confusion Judas took it up and exclaimed with the rest "Can it be I?" Now picture the situation. Each reclined at table on his left side, leaning on his left elbow. Peter's couch was behind the Master's and John's in front, and when the latter turned round in amazement, Peter nodded to him over the Master's shoulder that he should ask for an explanation. John leaned back on the dear breast and whispered: "Lord, who is it?" "It is the man," whispered the Lord, making a confidant of the disciple whom He loved, "for whom I shall dip the scrap and give it to him." Then He broke off a fragment of His unleavened cake and dipped it in the *charoseth* and handed it to Judas. Of old it was a token of kindness when a host presented a guest with a portion from his own dish; and

it was thus that all the disciples save John would construe the Lord's action. They would take it as His answer to the question which those quivering lips had just faltered, "Can it be I?" and it would check any suspicion which they might entertain of their unhappy comrade. And indeed it was graciously intended. It was a last appeal to the traitor, and it would have rejoiced the Master had he signified even by a look that his heart was softened. But he gave no token of contrition. He accepted the morsel nonchalantly, still dissembling his guilt in the eyes of his comrades. Thus hardening his heart, he sealed his doom. "Satan," says the Evangelist, "entered into him." What more could the Master do? "What you do," He said, "do promptly." It was an intimation that he should be gone, and he understood. And so did John; but the others, after that token, as they deemed it, of the Master's confidence in their comrade, suspected nothing. Since Judas was their treasurer, they naturally conceived that He was bidding him attend to some forgotten duty of his office—the procuring of the thankoffering (*chagigah*) for the morrow or perhaps, since he was always for his own Cf. Jo. xii. base ends so punctilious in this matter, the 4-6. putting of a contribution into the poor-box in the Temple-court. And so they saw nothing amiss when he rose from his couch and quitted the room.

His departure lifted a burden from the Lord's heart. At last He was free to commune with the eleven. "Now," He exclaimed, "is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him!" and forthwith He addressed Himself to the true business of the evening. First of all He definitely apprised them of the imminent

ordeal. That very night they would witness the tragedy whereof He had repeatedly forewarned them. "You will find a stumbling-block in Me this night. For it is written: 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'" It was a challenge to their resolution; and how chivalrously He expressed it! It was not of His own suffering that He thought but of their sorrowful plight—scattered like a crowd of frightened sheep when their shepherd has been stricken down and they are left to the spoiler's mercy; and He cheered them with a comforting assurance: "After I am raised I will go before you to Galilee." He must die, but He would live again, and He would meet them once more in the dear northern homeland.

The consolation, hardly intelligible at the moment, was lost upon them. They heard only the announcement of the imminent tragedy, and it grieved them especially that He should doubt their devotion. Peter broke in with a warm protest: "Though they all find a stumbling-block in you, I never shall." And he meant it, but he little realised his own weakness and the awfulness of the ordeal which awaited him and his comrades; else he would never have boasted thus but would rather have prayed for strength. "Simon, Simon," remonstrated the Master, pointedly calling him by his old name and so reminding him that only by the aid of grace could he prove steadfast, showing himself "Peter" indeed, "look you, Satan has got his will of you all to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And you by and by when you rally, confirm you your brothers." "Lord," he

asseverated, "I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."

The Master let it pass and continued His interrupted discourse. "My children," said He tenderly, "a little longer am I with you. You will seek Me, and what I said to the Jews—'Where I am going, you cannot come'—I now tell you too. A new commandment I give you: that you love one another—that you love one another as I have loved you. By this will every one recognise that you are My disciples—if you have love one for another."

Here again Peter broke in. "Lord," he cried, "where are you going?" "Where I am going," answered Jesus, "you cannot now follow Me, but you will follow Me afterwards." "Lord," insisted Peter, fancying that the Master had some desperate adventure in view, "why cannot I follow you at once? I will lay down my life for you." Brave, loving heart, so little recking of its own weakness and the terror of the ordeal! "You will lay down your life for Me? Verily, verily I tell you, ere cock-crow you will deny Me time and again." "Though I must die with you," persisted Peter, "I shall not deny you." And the others murmured their assent.

The Master compassionately surveyed their troubled faces. Their wild talk of desperate resistance showed how they still clung to their Jewish idea of the Messiah's Kingdom and how little they had yet profited by His teaching; and He essayed to bring its folly home to them. "When I sent you forth," said He, "without purse and wallet and sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they

*Cf. Jo. vii.  
34, viii.  
21.*

*Mt. x. 9,  
10; Mk. vi.  
8, 9; Lk.  
ix. 3.*



acknowledged. That had been their commission when they went forth as heralds of His Kingdom "like Mt. x. 16; sheep in the midst of wolves"; and they Lk. x. 3. had proved its efficacy. "But now," says He, "one who has a purse, let him take it, and a wallet likewise; and one who has none, let him sell his cloak and buy a sword!" Was this to be their commission now—now when the Gospel which He had charged them to proclaim was finding its fulfilment in His sacrificial death? "For I tell you that this which is written must be accomplished in

Is. liii. 12. Me, 'He was reckoned with the lawless.'

Yes, My destiny is having its accomplishment." They missed His meaning and took Him literally. So menacing had the situation grown that, notwithstanding that the bearing of arms on the

Jo. xviii. 10. Passover-day was prohibited, two of them—

Peter being one—had with them the poor weapons which, in those days when the highways were infested by brigands, travellers carried for defence; and these they displayed. "Lord," said they, "look,

Cf. Dt. iii. 26. here are two swords." Vexed by their dull-

ness, He dismissed the matter. "Enough!" said He, and proceeded with the administration of the Supper

They had now come to the supreme act of the celebration—the eating of the lamb's flesh; and as they were eating it, the Master took a cake of unleavened bread and blessed it. Then He broke it and handed a portion to each of His disciples. "This," said He, "is My body sacrificed for you. This do in memory of Me." The eating of the lamb's flesh was the paschal supper, and thereafter nothing more was eaten; but

ere the company sang the Second Hallel and dispersed, they drank a last cup which, because it was accompanied with thanksgiving, was called "The Cup of Blessing." And so it is written that "after the supper" the Master "took a cup," His own cup, and filled it, and after thanksgiving He passed round the bowl. "This cup," said He, "is the New Covenant sealed with My blood. This do, every time you drink it, in memory of Me."

Thus He instituted His sacramental memorial; and ere they sang the Hallel He cheered them with loving discourse. "Let not your heart be troubled," He began. "Believe in God, and believe in Me." It is not enough merely to believe in God. We must believe in Him aright; and we never believe in Him aright until we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and see God revealed in Him as our Heavenly Father. To believe in God thus and be assured that we are compassed in life and death and eternity by a love like the love of Jesus is to be done with doubt and fear. "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God, and believe in Me."

What was troubling the hearts of the eleven was His intimation that He was leaving them—leaving them that very night; and now He cheers them by showing them what His departure really meant, what gain it would bring them, and what heavenly consolations they would enjoy. "In My Father's House," He says, "there are many abodes: if there were not, I would have told you. I am going to prepare room for you. And if I go and prepare room for you, I am coming again and will receive you unto Myself, that where I am, you too may be."

It is a parable, and a little explanation will disclose its beautiful significance. Look at that word "abodes." Our English Version has "mansions," which is in truth not a translation at all. It is merely a transliteration of *mansiones*, the Vulgate's Latin rendering; and while *mansiones* exactly represents the Greek term (*monai*), its English derivative "mansions," suggesting as it does a stately and permanent residence, conveys an entirely wrong idea. Wycliffe, followed by Beza, has "in ye hous of my fadir ben many dwellyngis"; and it would have been well had our translators followed him too, since "dwellings" is at all events less positively misleading than "mansions." Yet even this misses the idea. The Greek term like the Latin means an "abode" or "abiding-place"; but we shall miss our Lord's meaning unless we understand that "abode" and its cognate verb "abide" had a peculiar signification in His day. There is a clear example in St. Luke's story of Zacchæus, where it is written that,

xix. 1-10. as He was passing through Jericho that Sabbath eve, our Lord said to the despised tax-gatherer: "I must *abide* at your house," asking merely entertainment for the night. There is the proper signification of the word. It meant "lodge," like a weary traveller in a wayside inn or an hospitable house. And so with the noun "abode." It was used of a traveller's station on the road or the encampment of an army on the march.

See how the thought befits the passage before us. Scripture is its own best interpreter, and

Lk. ii. 4-7. the most illuminating commentary here is the story of our Lord's birth at Bethlehem. It was

late in the day when Joseph and Mary reached "the inn." Think how an eastern *caravanserai* was constructed. Entering the gateway, you would find yourself in an open courtyard, where the beasts—asses, camels, and oxen—were tethered, surrounded along the inner wall with apartments for the travellers. These were the "abodes" or "lodgings." Commonly there was ample accommodation; but on special occasions when the highways were busy, a traveller arriving late might find every abode tenanted, and then he must sleep in the open or push on through the darkness. So it would often have happened to our Lord and His disciples in their journeyings to and fro; and so it happened to Joseph and Mary on that memorable evening. Every abode was occupied, and there was nothing for it but that she should lie down in the courtyard among the cattle. And there "she brought forth her first-born son and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

Here is the parable—His parable of the Wayside Inn—wherewith the Lord comforted His forlorn disciples in the Upper Room: "I am leaving you, but I am not forsaking you. I am only going on before to make ready for you. In My Father's House there are many abodes: I am going to prepare Cf. Lk.  
ii. 7. room for you. There will be room for you when you arrive, and a welcome too; for I will be there, waiting and watching for you, and I will come out to meet you and bring you in."

"I go your entrance to secure,  
And your abode prepare;  
Regions unknown are safe to you  
When I, your Friend, am there."

"Where I am, you too will be," He had said; and, reading a question in their faces, He added: "and where I am going, you know the way." "Lord," said Thomas, "we know not where you are going: how know we the way?" "I am the way," He answered, "and the truth and the life." What is this but a repetition of that saying which they had already heard from His lips six months ago in the court of the Temple: Jo. viii. 12. "One who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness but will have the light of life"? and it would be no dark saying to them now. He had come from the Father and He was now going to the Father; and if they recognised this, then they knew the way home, and if they followed Him they would not miss it.

This they could understand, but it puzzled them when He added: "Had you recognised Me, you had known the Father too; and henceforth you recognise Him and have seen Him." "Lord," cried Philip, "show us the Father, and it is all we want." The appeal grieved the Master. It proved that Philip and, alas! the others too had never yet perceived the wonder which all those three years had been before their eyes, and never yet realised who He was—the Eternal Son of God Incarnate, one with the Eternal cf. Jo. Father in character and thought and purpose, x. 30. so truly one that to know Him was to know the Father. "Have I been so long a time with you," He remonstrated, "and have you not recognised Me, Philip? One who has seen Me has seen the Father: how say you, 'Show us the Father'?" His words and works had been all divine, and they had missed their

significance if they had not recognised their evidence of His oneness with the Father.

Their dulness disappointed Him, but with this gentle remonstrance He brushed aside His disappointment and resumed His gracious task of consolation. He was indeed leaving them, but His departure did not mean that His ministry was ended. In truth it had but begun. For He was leaving them, His Apostles, to carry it on ; and if only they were faithful to their commission, they would do not merely the works which He had done but works yet greater. And that for two reasons. One was that they would still have access to Him by prayer ; and the second was that when He was gone, Another would come in His room to be to them and do for them all that He had been and done. That other was the Holy Spirit, but the Master does not so name Him here. He calls Him " the Paraclete," and it is not a little unfortunate that our English Versions have rendered this " the Comforter." Only here in the Lord's farewell discourse to the eleven is it employed in the New Testament of the Holy Spirit ; but it recurs in the First Epistle of St. John, with a significance which will by and by appear, as a ii. 1. designation of the Glorified Saviour. And there it is rendered " Advocate." So it should be rendered here too : " I will ask the Father, and another Advocate will He give you, even the Spirit of truth."

It was a novel name for the Holy Spirit, but it was no strange word to the disciples. It was a Greek word, a legal term denoting the " advocate " who pleads a prisoner's cause before the judge's tribunal, answering the charge of his " accuser " ; and like many



other Greek words these correlative terms had been borrowed by the Rabbis and are employed religiously in the Talmud. Thus it is written: "He who does one commandment has got him one 'advocate' (*para-clete*); and he who has committed one transgression, has got him one 'accuser.' Repentance and good works are as a shield in the face of punishment." Why was not our Lord content to speak of the Holy Spirit? The reason is that, in accordance with the rigid monotheism of the Old Testament revelation, that phrase signified to Jewish minds merely a divine influence. The personality of the Holy Spirit is a Christian revelation, and it was to express this that our Lord employed the novel designation. See how He here affirms the Spirit's personality, calling Him "another Advocate," His own Successor. During the years of His earthly sojourn our Lord had been the Advocate—God's Advocate pleading His cause with men and seeking to win them to faith; and now that He is gone God has still His Advocate on earth—the Holy Spirit who came in the Lord's room and continues evermore from age to age His gracious importunity.

And not merely would the Holy Spirit continue His work of pleading with the world but, the Lord assures His disciples, as His Successor He would be to themselves all that He had been to them while He was with them. If only they remained faithful, His grace would illumine their souls and reveal to them what heavenly fellowships were theirs. "In that day you will recognise that I am in My Father and you in Me and I in you. One who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me; and one who loves

Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

"Lord," broke in Judas—not, explains the Evangelist, the Man of Kerioth but the son of James, better known by his epithets Lebbæus, "the Hearty," and Thaddæus, "the Affectionate"—"Lord, and what has come to pass that you are going to manifest yourself to us and not to the world?" For the disciples their Master's "manifestation" signified that consummation which, in accordance with their Jewish idea, they had at the first so confidently anticipated though of late it had been fading from their view—the casting aside of His lowly guise and the revealing of His rightful majesty as the King of Israel. It would have been glad tidings to them, reviving their wellnigh extinct hope, had He spoken of "manifesting Himself to the world"; but when He spoke of manifesting Himself merely to them, Judas wondered what He might mean.

It grieved the Lord that they should still be clinging thus to that vain ideal. "If one love Me," said He, completing His interrupted promise, "he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make abode with him." Observe how He repeats that word "abode" which He had just employed in His parable of the Wayside Inn. Long ago in days of national desolation the prophet had prayed: "O Thou Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble, why shouldest Thou be as a sojourner in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?" Surely that poignant entreaty was now before the Master's mind, and He answers it here.

Cf. Jo.  
vii. 4.

Jer. xiv. 8.

The disciples were dreaming of an earthly Kingdom, and He tells them that it is not thus that God will dwell with His people. It is ever "as a sojourner" that He comes to them here, "as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night." This is not their home ; and when He comes to them it is not to stay with them but to carry them with Him on the homeward journey. "Arise ye," is His command, "and depart ; for this is not your rest " ; and if they would retain His fellowship, they must bear Him company.

" Oh ! well it is for ever,  
Oh ! well for evermore,  
My nest hung in no forest  
Of all this death-doomed shore :  
Yea, let the vain world vanish,  
As from the ship the strand,  
While glory, glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land."

At the moment the truth was hidden from them, but they would presently discover it. " All this have I spoken to you while sojourning with you ; but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you it all and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave you ; peace, My peace, I give you. Not as the world gives, do I give it you." For how is it that the world offers peace ? Either it appeals to that instinctive optimism, that hope which " springs eternal in the human breast," that our trouble will pass ; or at the worst it bids us play the Stoic and set adversity at defiance. But the peace which our Lord offers, and not merely offers but bestows, is a peace which

is ours in the midst of trouble. It is His own peace, the peace which dwelt in His heart all the years of His progress through the world and was with Him still in that last dark hour—a peace born not of the Stoicism which sternly accepts the inevitable but of the faith which recognises in each painful experience a Father's will and a Father's hand. "Not as the world gives, do I give it you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful."

It was now midnight, and at midnight the paschal supper ended. The reason is that it was at midnight that the destroying angel had passed through Cf. Ex. xi. the land of Egypt, and hence the idea had 4, xii. 29. arisen among the Jews that it would be midnight when the Messiah, their Deliverer, appeared. And so, that they might welcome Him should He appear, they protracted the feast till midnight and then dispersed. The hour's arrival was welcome to our Lord, since at any moment the traitor and the officers of the Sanhedrin might break into the room and arrest Him; and though He had said so much to the eleven, Ps. cxv-cxviii. there was more that He had still to say. "Rise!" said He. "Let us go hence." And when they had sung the Second Hallel, they took their departure.

## THE MESSIANIC VINE

Jo. xv-xvii.

THE Master's communing with the eleven did not end with the Supper. There was still much counsel which He would fain address to them ere He was taken from them ; and He would have lingered with them a while in the Upper Room but for the risk of the traitor's invasion. The same apprehension forbade His repairing with them immediately to Gethsemane,

Jo. xviii. 2. since Judas knew the place of His nightly resort and would have sought Him there.

Whither could He betake Himself to be a little longer secure from interruption ? Usually the gates of the Temple were shut by night, but at the Feast of the Passover they were flung open at midnight lest peradventure the Messiah should appear and " suddenly

Mal. iii. 1. come to His Temple." They were standing open when the Master and His disciples left the

Upper Room ; and where could He be safer from molestation than within the silent and deserted precincts ?

Thither they repaired, and passing into the inner court they were confronted by King Herod's magnificent Sanctuary of marble and gold, glistening in the clear moonlight. What chiefly caught the spectator's eye was the golden emblazonry above the entrance—the trailing branches of a vine laden with grape-clusters large as a man's stature. It was a triumph of artistry, and the Latin historian tells how it

impressed the Romans when they took the city and invaded that sacred court which no profane foot was suffered to tread. Since the vine was the emblem of Bacchus, the rude soldiery fancied that the Jews were his worshippers.

And what was its actual significance? Originally the vine was an emblem of Israel; but even as "the Son of God" which properly meant Israel Cf. Ps. lxxx. 8-16; Is. v. 1-7; Jer. ii. 21. came to mean first the King of Israel and then the Messiah, the King of Israel *par excellence*, so in later days the vine was an emblem of the Messiah. "O God of Hosts," runs the Rabbinical paraphrase of the eightieth psalm, "turn now again; Ps. lxxx. 14, 15. look from heaven and see, and remember in mercy this vine, and the vine-shoot which Thy right hand hath planted, and the King Messiah whom Thou hast established for Thyself." The disciples knew well the meaning of the sacred emblem; and there in the silent court of the Temple on that solemn night the Lord pointed to it and made it the text of His further discourse.

"I," He began, "am the true Vine"—the reality which the vine symbolised—"and My Father is the Husbandman." His disciples were the branches; and here lay the reason of all their suffering: it was the Husbandman's pruning of His branches that they might "bear much fruit," and His excision of branches which, alas! were dead and withered. So it had befallen the traitor, and so it would befall every branch which did not maintain vital union with the stem, drinking the nourishment of its sap.

He was the stem; and what was it to be in vital union with Him? It was to "abide in His love"



and recognise the obligation which it imposed upon them. Love's uttermost proof is the laying down of one's life for one's friends ; and He was laying down His life for them. Here was their sacred obligation ; here was His parting commandment—that they should love one another as He had loved them.

They must as His disciples lay their account for persecution. He had been persecuted, and had He not often told them that “ a disciple is not above his teacher nor a slave above his lord ” ?

Mt. x. 24,  
25 ; Jo.  
xiii. 16.

And this they would experience when they went forth into a hostile world and testified of Him. It was indeed a stern ordeal that awaited them, but in the midst of it they would have strong consolations to sustain them. It would avail them much when they were excommunicated as heretics and every one who killed them fancied that he was offering a pious service to God, to know that this was only what they should expect. And therefore He was forewarning them “ that when the hour came, they might remember that He had told them.”

And furthermore, when He was gone, they would not be left alone. The Advocate would be with them in His room, and they would be cheered by His blessed ministry. His illumination would make every dark thing plain. At the moment all looked very dark, but presently the truth would appear, and what seemed disastrous defeat would be recognised as a glorious triumph. “ When the Advocate has come, He will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment : of sin, because they believe not in Me ; of righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer behold Me ; of judgment, because the prince

of this world has been judged." When the Lord was condemned and crucified, it seemed the triumph of wrong over right ; but when He arose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God, then it was seen that right had triumphed, and then appeared the sinfulness of unbelief, the righteousness of the moral order, and the doom of the power of evil. All this was hidden meanwhile from the disciples, but they would recognise it when the Spirit of truth came and guided them into all the truth.

And here was another consolation which they would have when He was gone. Hidden though He was from mortal eyes, yet in His gracious operations they would see the evidence of His continual presence. "A little while, and you no longer behold Me ; and again a little while, and you will see Me." The paradox puzzled them, and they whispered to each other : "What is this that He is telling us ?" And so He explained it to them. For a little while they would grieve and lament, and the unbelieving world would rejoice in its seeming triumph ; but only for a little, and then their grief would be turned to joy. Just last night He had told them that the tribulations which would ensue on His departure were nothing else than the birth-pangs of a better world ; and this they would perceive when their minds were illumined by the grace of the Holy Spirit. "When a woman is in travail, she has grief because her hour is come ; but when she brings forth her child, she no longer remembers her distress for her joy that a man has been born into the world." And once they understood this, they would never more be dismayed.

Whatever befell they would recognise it as the working out of God's redemptive purpose.

"In that day," He says, "you will entreat Me for nothing." Hitherto prayer had meant for the disciples nothing else than entreaty, the crying of their fearful and troubled hearts for help and guidance; but henceforth it would have a new meaning for them. Realising their union with the Father through their glorified Lord, they would be well content with His appointments, and prayer would be for them no longer entreaty but surrender to His sovereign and blessed will. And this sort of prayer never goes unanswered. "Verily, verily I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in My name. Hitherto you have asked nothing in My name: ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be complete."

What more could He say? He had poured out His heart to His disciples, assuring them of His undying love and striving to dissipate their alarm by discovering to them the issue of their present sorrow; but again and again in the course of that night they had evinced by their bewildered questions how incapable they were meanwhile of grasping the truth. Further communing were unavailing. He had indeed much more to tell them, but they could not bear it at present. The difficulty was that the future was all so strange to them, and He could tell them of it only by parables. There was nothing for it but to await the issue, and then the Holy Spirit would reveal its significance. "All this have I spoken to you in parables, but an hour is coming when no longer in parables will I speak to you but send you plain tidings of the Father." He had told them that

Jo. xvi. 12.

it was advantageous for them that He should go away and the Advocate come in His room; and here the reason appears. The chief of His parables was His Incarnation—that gracious accommodation to their material limitations. It was impossible for them to see the Father with their mortal eyes or hear Him with their mortal ears; and that they might conceive of Him, the Eternal Son had become flesh and dwelt among them. Jo. xvi. 7.

“ So, to their mortal eyes subdued,  
Flesh-veiled, but unconcealed,  
They knew in Him the fatherhood  
And heart of God revealed.”

But it was merely “ an image of the Invisible God ” that they beheld in Him while He was with them wearing the form of frail mortality; and only when, still cherishing them in loving remembrance, He had passed from their sight to the Father’s House, carrying thither His glorified humanity, did they realise His spiritual presence and their fellowship with the Father through Him.

Surely it was advantageous for them that He should go away and the Advocate come in His room. His departure was not the cessation of His ministry. Here is the truth which St. John proclaims when in his first epistle he speaks of our Glorified Lord as “ our Advocate with the Father.” While 1 Jo. ii. 1. He was here in the days of His flesh, He was the Father’s Advocate with the children of men, presenting to them His overtures of peace and seeking to win them to faith. And when He went away, not only did He send His Holy Spirit to continue evermore

His advocacy, witnessing for God and pleading His cause in human hearts, but He carried our cause into the court of Heaven, pleading it there evermore, our Advocate with the Father.

Do we inquire what need there is that He should plead with God on our behalf? wherefore, since He is one with God and God is our Father, He should intercede for us with One who loves us even as He does? See how He answers this question: "I do not tell you that I will entreat the Father for you. For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from God." It is told how after the Union of the Crowns the English fretted at the favour which was shown to Scotsmen in the allocation of offices of honour and emolument at the royal court. And what was the reason of it? It was that a Scotsman was on the throne, and Scotsmen had an advocate with the King. His own Scottish heart pleaded their cause. And even so have we children of men an Advocate with God in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God who made Himself one with us that we might be one with Him, linking God to humanity by His Incarnation and humanity to God by His Ascension. It is God's own heart that pleads our cause and makes continual intercession for us; and thus we are bound with gold chains about His feet, being infinitely dear and precious to Him as the purchase of His dear Son's precious blood.

"I do not tell you that I will entreat the Father for you. For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from God. I came forth from the Father and

have come into the world ; again I am leaving the world and going to the Father." That was a plain declaration. " See," cried the disciples, poor, loyal, bewildered souls, anxious to assure Him of their faith, " now you are speaking plainly ; it is no parable that you are telling. Now we know that you know everything and have no need that any one should entreat you. Hereby we believe that you came forth from God." Alas ! they little realised what was before them. " At present," He murmured, " you believe. Look you, an hour is coming, ay it has come, when you will be scattered each of you to his own home and leave Me alone. And I am not alone : the Father is with Me." It was well for them to know the grim reality ; yet He would not dishearten them, and He added a ringing challenge : " All this have I told you that in Me you may have peace. In the world it is distress that you have ; but courage ! I have conquered the world."

He had done communing with them, and it only remained that, ere going to meet His doom, He should commend to God Himself and them and the cause which He had entrusted to them. Standing there in their midst He lifted His eyes to Heaven and thus poured out His heart :

" Father, the hour hath come. Glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may glorify Thee, even as Thou gavest Him authority over all flesh, that whatever Cf. Mt. xi. Thou hast given Him, He may give them life <sup>27</sup>. eternal. And this is the eternal life—the recognition of Thee the only true God and Him whom Thou didst commission, even Jesus Christ. I glorified Thee on the earth by accomplishing the work which Thou hast



given Me to do ; and now glorify Thou Me, Father, by Thine own side with the glory which ere the world was I had by Thy side.

“ I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world. Thine they were, and to Me Thou gavest them ; and they have kept Thy message. Now have they recognised that whatsoever things Thou hast given Me are from Thee. For the words which Thou gavest Me I have given them ; and they received them, and they truly recognised that I came forth from Thee, and they believed that Thou didst commission Me. It is for them that I entreat. It is not for the world that I entreat, but for those whom Thou hast given Me ; for they are Thine—all Mine is Thine and Thine Mine—and I have been glorified in them. And no longer am I in the world : it is they that are in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one even as we are. While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me ; I guarded them, and none of them was lost—only the son of loss,<sup>1</sup> that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now I am coming to Thee, and I am speaking thus in the world that they may have My joy completed in their own experience. I have given them Thy message, and the world hated them because they belong not to the world even as I belong not to the world. My entreaty is not that Thou remove them from the

<sup>1</sup> A Hebrew phrase. As “ a son of wickedness ” meant a villain, so “ a son of loss ” meant a wastrel. Was our Lord thinking of the scene at the supper at Bethany (cf. Mt. xxvi. 8) ? “ Wherefore this loss ? ” Judas protested when he saw Mary’s costly offering, oblivious of his own tragic loss.

world but that Thou keep them from the Evil One. They belong not to the world even as I belong not to the world. Consecrate them in the truth: Thy message is truth. Even as Thou didst commission Me to the world, I also commissioned them to the world; and it is for their sake that I am consecrating Myself, that they also may be consecrated in the truth.

“It is not for these only that I entreat, but for those who through their message believe in Me, that they may all be one—that, even as Thou, O Father, art in Me and I in Thee, they also may be in us, that the world may believe that Thou didst commission Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one—I in them and they in Me, that they may be perfectly one, that the world may recognise that Thou didst commission Me and love them even as Thou lovedst Me.

“O Father, what Thou hast given Me—My wish is that where I am they also may be with Me, to behold My glory which Thou hast given Me because Thou lovedst Me ere the foundation of the world. O righteous Father—and the world did not recognise Thee;<sup>1</sup> but I recognised Thee, and these recognised that Thou didst commission Me. And I made Thy name known to them and will make it known, that the love wherewith Thou lovedst them may be in them and I in them.”

<sup>1</sup> A sentence broken by emotion. Cf. Jo. xiv. 22, xxi. 21.

## THE ARREST

Mt. xxvi. 36-56 ; Mk. xiv. 32-52 ; Lk. xxii. 39-53 ; Jo. xviii. 1-11.

QUITTING the sacred precincts, they took their way along the silent streets to the gate of the city. Between the eastern wall and the ascent of Mount Olivet lay the ravine of the Kidron. It was no pleasant "brook," as our English Version has it, shaded, as the Greek transliteration of the name suggests, by cedar trees. The word rendered "brook" is properly "winter-torrent"; and the Hebrew name Kidron signifies a dark stream. What darkened it was the draining into it of the blood of the sacrificial victims. In summer-time the bed of the ravine was dry; but that April night it was flooded with the winter rains, and as the Lamb of God crossed it, the stream was tinged with the blood of the paschal lambs which the previous afternoon had been slain by thousands at the altar in the Temple-court. It was this truly dramatic coincidence that moved the Evangelist to mention the otherwise insignificant circumstance that on His way to Gethsemane with the eleven He crossed the ravine of the Kidron.

It was past midnight, and the city was asleep; yet their movements were not unobserved. It had of late been increasingly apparent to all who wished Him well how perilous was the Lord's situation; and His solicitude for secrecy in arranging that He and His disciples should eat the Passover at their house had

quickened the apprehension of Mary and her son John Mark. It was evident that He anticipated trouble; and when the lad went to rest after celebrating the Feast with his own household, anxiety for the Master held him wakeful till he could no longer endure it, and he sprang from his couch to go forth and see if all were well. There was no time for him to don his wearing apparel; nor was it necessary, since the nightdress of well-to-do folk was a loose robe of white linen, quite presentable in public and sufficient for comfort in a mild climate. Thus attired he quitted the house. He knew the Master's nightly resort: indeed it may be that Gethsemane was Mary's property; and he hastened thither. He did not find them there, since they had gone from the Upper Room to the Temple-court; but presently he heard their approaching footsteps, and he concealed himself among the trees of the orchard and lay *perdu* to observe what might befall.

The eleven were weary, and they would fain after their nightly wont have wrapped themselves in their cloaks and lain down to sleep; but the Lord knew what was coming, and He had no thought of rest. He would not sleep: He would pray. He needed His Father's help for the dread ordeal, and He craved also the support of human sympathy; and now as ever He turned to the trusty three. "Sit here," said He to the others, "while I go and pray yonder"; and He retired with Peter and James and John to a deeper glade of the orchard. Hitherto for the sake of His feeble disciples He had hidden His own disquietude, but now alone with the three He unburdened His heart. "He began," says St. Matthew according

to our Version, "to be sorrowful and sore troubled": "He began," says St. Mark, "to be greatly amazed and sore troubled." Observe that phrase "sore troubled." The precise significance of the Greek original is uncertain. One etymological suggestion is that the verb means properly "to be away from one's people"; and this accords well with its general use. It is used, for example, of the bewilderment of the soul when it leaves the body and finds itself, "naked and shivering," amid strange and unaccustomed surroundings. In the New Testament it occurs only here and Phil. ii. 26. in that passage of the Epistle to the Philippians where the Apostle, a prisoner at Rome, tells them how the good Epaphroditus, who had brought him their gift and their message of sympathy, had fallen ill, no doubt of the fever so prevalent there in the sultry autumn, and how, thinking of his friends so far away, he "longed after them all and was *sore troubled*." So our Version has it, but the circumstances define the Apostle's meaning. What he says is that Epaphroditus, longing for his friends, was "homesick."

And this is the signification of the word here. Compassed with malice and menaced by a cruel death, our Lord "began to be amazed and homesick"—sick with longing for the Father's House and the glory which, ere the world was, He had by the Father's side. He would soon be there, but between Him and His home lay that dread ordeal which all His earthly days had loomed before Him. And now that it was upon Him, His frail humanity shuddered at the grim prospect. His anguish would have its way, but He would not dismay the faithful three with the sight

of it. "My soul," said He, "is grieved—grieved to death. Stay here, and keep awake." And He withdrew a stone's cast off and prostrated Himself on the ground in an agony of distress, "offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death." Heb. v. 7.

Who witnessed His struggle and heard His cries? It was not the three; for not only were they a stone's throw off but so weary were they that, despite His injunction, they fell asleep. Yet there was a witness of the scene; for Mark was lurking near by among the trees of the orchard, and he stole after the Master and watched His agony. Here surely is the origin of a moving legend which, though no part of the authentic text, has found its way into St. Luke's narrative. In the ghostly light of the moonbeams breaking through the tremulous foliage the heavy-eyed watchers descried a white-robed figure bending over the prostrate Master and took it at the moment for "an angel from heaven strengthening Him." Lk. xxii. 43, 44  
R.V.  
marg.

For nigh an hour He lay in anguish, and His prayer all the while was that even yet the awful doom might be averted. "O My Father," He cried, "everything is possible for Thee: remove this cup from Me." And an answer was vouchsafed. Then as in every dark hour of His experience hitherto He remembered the purpose which He had been commissioned to accomplish, the purpose of His Father's blessed will; and He found strength in a fresh surrender thereto. "Nay, not what I will but what Thou wilt." Mt. xxvi. 40; Mk. xiv. 37.



Thus calmed He arose and returned to the three, desiring the comfort of their fellowship; but alas! they were asleep. "Simon," said He, rebuking by this use of his old name the disciple who had promised so much, "are you sleeping? Had you not strength to keep awake for a single hour?" Plainly there was no help for Him in human sympathy, and He must seek it again in heavenly communion. "Keep awake," said He to the three, forewarning them of their own need of strength for the approaching ordeal, "and pray, that you be not put to trial." They were too ashamed to speak, but their mute sorrow touched His heart and He added, kindly excusing them: "The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak."

Therewith He withdrew and resumed His communion with God. The storm which had shaken Him was over, and He did not now cast Himself on the ground and cry in anguish. His prayer was a renewal of His self-surrender. "My Father," He said, "if this cup cannot pass away without My drinking it, Thy will be done." Then He went back to the watchers only to find them again drowsing, and without a word He turned away, leaving them to their confusion. Hardly had He resumed His prayer when He heard the tramp of armed men and saw through the trees the flicker of their torches and the gleam of armour. It was the traitor and his company, not only the officers of the Sanhedrin but a detachment of the cohort—the Roman garrison at Jerusalem—sent by the governor at the Sanhedrin's request to effect the arrest in case of resistance. He hastened to His disciples and roused them all. "Are you sleeping still," He cried,

Cf. Jo.  
xviii. 3, 12  
R.V.  
marg.

“and taking your ease? Look you, the hour is nigh, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! let us be going. Look you, My betrayer is nigh.”

It was a somewhat motley company that presently appeared on the scene. See how it was composed. The Sanhedrin had its own officers, and when Judas quitted the Upper Room and, betaking himself to the rulers, announced his readiness to betray the Master, they would in ordinary circumstances have despatched these with him on the unholy errand. But at the Passover season for the preservation of order in the crowded city the Roman governor repaired thither from Cæsarea, the provincial capital, and occupied the Prætorium, his official residence at Jerusalem; and they durst not act without his approval. They had therefore, though fretting at the delay, to report the matter to him and obtain the service of a detachment of soldiers from the garrison. These marched to Gethsemane guided by the traitor and accompanied by the Sanhedrin's officers who, armed with truncheons and carrying torches to show the way among the trees, gave the troop, as the Evangelists remark, the appearance of a rabble.

Mt. xxvi.  
47; Mk.  
xiv. 43;  
Lk. xxii.  
47.

In truth those officers of the Sanhedrin had little heart for the work. Once already some six months ago they had been commissioned to arrest Him; and, laying wait for Him in the Temple-court, so impressed were they by His teaching that they durst not meddle with Him. And their wonder had in no wise diminished during the interval. Rude and ignorant men, they shared the popular

Cf. Jo. vii.  
32, 45, 46.

sentiment and regarded Him with a superstitious awe, which was now quickened by their ghostly surroundings.

It lay with the soldiers to make the arrest, and here a difficulty presented itself. As they approached, they saw not one man but twelve; and their commander turned to the guide and demanded of him which was to be arrested. Alas for the wretched traitor! He had thought his work would be done when he had conducted the soldiers to the spot, and he would keep in the background and steal away unobserved by his old comrades. But now he is forced to the front. He would dissemble his villainy to the last. The Master knew it, but might he not impose on the eleven and make as though he had done the errand which had taken him from the Upper Room, and had now come to resume his place among them? "The one whom I kiss," said he to the commander, "is he. Arrest him." A kiss was the greeting of friends when they met, and Judas stepped forward to the Master. "Hail, Rabbi!" said he and kissed Him, and not merely kissed Him but, as the Greek has it, "kissed Him tenderly."

It was the extremity of heartless effrontery, and the Lord indignantly repelled it. "Comrade," said He, Mt. xxvi. 50. "to your errand!" and brushing the wretch aside, He confronted the officers of the Sanhedrin and demanded: "Whom are you seeking?" "Jesus the Nazarene" they faltered. "I am He" He answered, advancing to surrender Himself. A dramatic scene ensued. It is told in ancient history how Gaius Marius, a fugitive from the defeat which closed his triumphant career, was captured at Minturnæ

and there detained until the Senate should determine his doom. It was decreed that he must die, and a dragoon was commissioned to despatch him. Sword in hand he repaired to the cell. "Sirrah," cried the old hero, his eyes flashing in the dim light, "dare you slay Gaius Marius?" and the assassin flung down his sword and fled, crying "I cannot kill Gaius Marius!" Even so it happened now. As He stepped forward to surrender Himself to them, the officers, shaken by ghostly terrors, tumultuously retreated and with oriental abandon dropped on the ground. "Whom are you seeking?" He repeated. "Jesus the Nazarene" they replied again. "I told you that I am He; so," said He, pointing to the eleven, "if you are seeking Me, let these go their way."

His chivalrous appeal on their behalf enkindled His disciples' devotion, and as the soldiers seized Him and were pinioning Him, Peter drew his sword—that poor weapon which he bore beneath his mantle and had displayed in the Upper Room—and, rushing to the rescue, fell upon Malchus, the Chief Priest's slave, and slashed his right ear. It was a desperate deed and would have provoked a bloody reprisal had not the Master intervened. "Sheathe your sword!" He cried and, wrenching His hands free, "Let go," said He: "just thus far," and touched Malchus' wound and stanchèd it. Then He remonstrated with Peter: "The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it? Or do you fancy that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at this moment set at My side more than twelve legions of angels?" Though all the twelve men whom He had chosen were about Him sword in hand, He needed not their

poor championship. What were they worth in comparison with twelve legions of the heavenly host ?

The Sanhedrin's officers were now crowding round, indignant at the assault on their comrade—the very men who had never dared to molest Him in the Temple-court and who a few moments ago had retreated so tumultuously before Him. Emboldened by the presence of the soldiers, they were clamouring for the arrest of the disciples too ; and the Lord sternly and contemptuously addressed them, taunting them with their cowardice. Their insistence prevailed, and as the soldiers advanced to arrest them, the disciples incontinently fled. All the eleven escaped, but another who had joined their company was less fortunate. This was Mark. He had emerged from his concealment and was watching the scene ; and when he turned to flee, a soldier grasped his loose robe, and he would have been captured had he not slipped out of it and fled naked. Yet it would seem that he did not escape scathless. At any rate in after days, when he was famed in the Church as the Evangelist, he bore the curious epithet of “stump-fingered”—a memorial perhaps of that tragic night in Gethsemane when in the wild scuffle his hand was mutilated by the slash of a sword-blade.

## THE TRIAL:

### (I) BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

Jo. xviii. 12-27 ; Mt. xxvi. 57-xxvii. 10 ; Mk. xiv. 53-72 ;  
Lk. xxii. 54-71.

OUR Lord's offence in the eyes of the Jewish rulers was blasphemy ; and since blasphemy was a capital crime, it fell under the cognisance of the supreme court of the Sanhedrin. Had it been the day-time when He was arrested, He would forthwith have been conducted to the Hall of Hewn Stone ; but it was now barely 2 A.M., and since the Sanhedrin might not meet ere the time of morning sacrifice—about 3 A.M., when from the Temple watch-tower the gleam of daybreak was descried on Mount Hebron—there was still a full hour to run. What should be done with Him during the interval ?

This had been arranged. In those days the most influential personage in the Jewish state was Annas, the Chief Priest *emeritus*. Notwithstanding that the august office, formerly hereditary and tenable for life, was then at the disposal of the Roman governors and the Herodian princes, who sold it, as opportunity arose, to the highest bidder, he had held it for ten years, and on his deposition by Valerius Gratus in the year 15 A.D. he had contrived to retain it in his own family. It was now held by his son-in-law Joseph Caiaphas ; but Annas was still predominant, and how



could the interval between our Lord's arrest and the meeting of the Sanhedrin be more profitably employed than in a precognition by the astute veteran in order to expedite the formal trial?

And so, says the Evangelist, "they led Him to Annas first." They had not far to lead Him; for

Jo. xviii. 13. Annas had his residence on the slope of Olivet close by the Orchard of Gethsemane—

a stately mansion built with the wealth acquired by administrative corruption, especially the profit

Cf. Jo. ii. 14-16; Mt. xxi. 12, 13; Mk. xi. 15-17; Lk. xix. 45, 46. of the unholy traffic which he and his family carried on at the festal seasons in the outer court of the Temple, and hence popularly nicknamed "The Booths of the Sons of

Annas." Thither the soldiers and the officers of the Sanhedrin conducted our Lord. The eleven had fled, but two of them, Peter and "another disciple," none other than John the Evangelist, presently rallied and followed after them. On their arrival at the outer gate of the palace it was opened to admit the prisoner and His guard, and then closed. No others had the right of entry, but it is written that John was "known to the Chief Priest," and the portress let him pass in. Peter had no such credential, and he was shut out. There he must have remained, but John spoke for him to the portress and she opened the gate and admitted him too.

Is not this a surprising incident? John was a fisherman from the Lake of Galilee, and he was known in Jerusalem only as a follower of one who had incurred the displeasure of the rulers and had just been arrested on a charge of heresy and sedition. What intimacy was possible between him and that proud and pitiless

tyrant? The question has long been debated, and one old suggestion still in vogue is that he may have belonged to a priestly family and thus, though only a Galilean fisherman, may have been a kinsman of the Chief Priest. But this is a pure fancy, and the explanation is far simpler and more significant. It was furnished long ago by a forgotten scholar who was named Nonnus and belonged to Panopolis in Upper Egypt. He was born and bred a pagan, and his early fame rested on his poem the *Dionysiaca*, a monumental work in forty-eight books, dealing with mythology and archæology. On his conversion to Christianity he devoted his learning to its service. His ambition was to commend his new faith to his old associates and win the intellect of the world for Christ. He was no preacher or controversialist but a studious man of letters, loving retirement; and here he found a rare opportunity. The New Testament, being written in the Common Greek, the unliterary vernacular of the period, made no appeal to literary taste; and so, about the year 400, Nonnus executed a metrical paraphrase of St. John's Gospel in the form of a classical epic. Its poetic merit is indeed slight; but it exhibits much literary skill, and it possesses this abiding value for students of the New Testament—that it preserves not a few traditional elucidations of obscure passages.

Here is an instance. "There followed in His path at a distance," so runs his paraphrase of the passage before us, "Simon and another young comrade who, being well known from his trade of fish-catching to the famed Chief Priest, went running in Christ's train into the courtyard." See what this means. Ere the

Lord called Him, John had been a fisherman at Capernaum, and the Galilean fishery was a thriving industry. The Lake swarmed with fish which, by reason of their excellent quality, were in large request. Close to Capernaum was a town called Taricheæ or "The Pickleries" where they were preserved, and thence they were exported far and wide. The market of Jerusalem was supplied from Galilee, and the demand was particularly large during the Passover season when the city was crowded with worshippers. In this busy industry John had all his life had an interest, and no small interest ; for he and his brother James and their father Zebedee were employed in it, and evidently in a somewhat large way since, as the Evangelist mentions, they had several paid hands. Of course they engaged in the export trade, and they would certainly have a connection with the capital.

Here lies the explanation of the Apostle's acquaintance with the Chief Priest. He was no stranger at the palace, since for years past he had never visited Jerusalem without presenting himself there in the way of business. He would have accounts to settle every time. The portress knew him well ; and what wonder that she admitted him on that eventful night and at his request let him bring his friend with him into the courtyard ?

And what of the Master meanwhile ? The officers had taken Him in charge and leaving the soldiers in the courtyard had ushered Him into the presence of Cf. Lk. Annas. What transpired is but meagrely xxii. 59. recorded ; for though it lasted an hour, it was a private interview, and what little the Evangelist knew he learned probably by the report of the officers.

The purpose of the astute old Chief Priest was to elicit from the prisoner some admission which might be employed against Him at the subsequent trial; and he questioned Him "regarding His disciples and regarding His teaching"—promising fields of inquiry both. For had He not a Zealot among His disciples, and might He not on this score be made out a ring-leader of sedition? And did not His attitude toward the Sacred Law and His claim to a divine commission furnish ground for a charge of blasphemy?

The Lord knew the purpose of this cross-examination, and He recognised also that it was nothing less than a flagrant illegality. For the Jewish law, always scrupulously merciful, required that a trial on a capital charge should begin with the production of witnesses for the defence, and the attempt to extort from Him some damning admission was thus a gross violation of justice. And so at last He entered a protest. "I have spoken freely to the world. I always taught in the synagogue and in the Temple where all the Jews meet, and in secret I spoke nothing. Why are you questioning Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them. See," said He, indicating the officers, "these men know what I said." It was a courteous remonstrance, yet it was at the same time a sharp rebuke. Annas was not accustomed to have his procedure challenged. He would flush with indignation; and observing his discomfiture and thinking to curry favour, one of his creatures smote the prisoner. "Is it thus," he demanded, "that you answer the Chief Priest?" The Lord quietly replied: "If I spoke ill, witness of the ill; but if well, why do you strike Me?" It was a gross outrage not only

on the prisoner but on the tribunal before which He stood, and Annas should have sternly reprimanded it. But he let it pass. The hour for the convening of the Sanhedrin was nigh, and he ended the examination and dismissed the prisoner to His trial.

And what had been passing meanwhile in the courtyard below? When the portress at John's request admitted Peter, she remarked as she let him in: "You are one of this fellow's disciples too, aren't you?" She meant no harm. It was mere banter; and had he, like his comrade, made no disguise and simply assented, that would have been the end of it. But in his dread of arrest he blurted out a denial. "I am not" said he, and hastily passed on. It was chilly in the open at the bleak hour before dawn, and the domestics and the soldiers in waiting for the prisoner had gathered round a brazier in the midst of the court. Peter joined the group, and with a poor assumption of indifference sat warming himself in the cheerful blaze; but the portress was a mischievous damsel and would not let him escape. She presently stepped forward and confronted him. "You were with Jesus the Galilean too" said she. "I don't know what you mean" he faltered. All eyes were turned on him, and he withdrew in confusion and sought the seclusion of the wide gateway. But there was no escape. His tormentor returned to her post with some of the curious idlers. "This is one of them" she cried, and with an oath he denied it: "I don't know the fellow," and retreated into the courtyard. The whole company gathered about him and after the manner of their sort diverted themselves by playing upon his terror. "Indeed," cried one, "you are one

of them ; for you are a Galilean : your accent betrays you." " I am not " he vociferated. Among his tormentors, as ill luck would have it, was a kinsman of Malchus who had been present at the arrest and witnessed Peter's assault. " Didn't I see you in the orchard with him ? " said he. This drove the wretch frantic. Old habits die hard, and with a torrent of oaths as in former days when he was a rough fisherman by the northern Lake, " I don't know the fellow," he shouted.

It was now daybreak, when " the winged messenger of day " ushered in the fourth watch (3-6 A.M.), " calling men back to cares and toil " ; and while Peter's oaths were ringing through the courtyard, a cock crew, and back to his remembrance rushed the words which the Master had spoken to him a few hours ago in the Upper Room : " Ere cock-crow you will deny Me time and again." Just then, as it chanced, the prisoner was being conducted across the courtyard from His examination within doors. As He passed the noisy group, He had heard the blasphemy of those lips which had vowed devotion unto death ; and when Peter, startled by the cock-crow, turned round, he saw that gentle face surveying him with sorrowful reproach. Only a look, but it broke the recreant's heart. He burst into tears of bitter grief and fled through the open gate from the scene of his shame.

From the mansion of Annas the prisoner was conducted down the slope of Olivet and through the streets of the still slumbering city to the Hall of Hewn Stone, there to stand His trial before the Sanhedrin under the presidency of Caiaphas, the acting Chief Priest. Early as it was there was a full attendance. Not that there was need of deliberation ; for already, on the



double score of His habitual violation of their Sabbath law and His repeated claim to deity, the rulers had found Him guilty of blasphemy and had determined that, when opportunity offered, He should be put to death ; and now that He had been delivered into their hands, what had they to do but pass sentence upon Him ? Here, however, they were confronted by an embarrassing restraint. In those days, when the Jews were vassals of Rome, " it was not allowable for the Sanhedrin to put any one to death." It was not enough for the Chief Priest and his colleagues to pass sentence on the prisoner : their sentence was subject to the procurator's revision, and it must be such as he would approve.

Such a sentence they now set themselves to procure. According to the Jewish law blasphemy was a capital crime punishable by stoning to death ; but what had the Roman law to do with questions of the Jewish religion ? The only way of attaining their end was by giving the case a political colour and arraigning Him on a charge of turbulence and sedition ; nor was this difficult in those troublous days when the land was seething with disaffection. They produced a number of witnesses ; but so inconsistent were their allegations that it was impossible to construct a charge which would bear the scrutiny of an impartial tribunal. Only one had a show of reason. It was preferred by two witnesses who recalled that cryptic saying of His at the Passover three years ago : " Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it." It was a prophecy of His death and resurrection, but they had, perhaps in all good faith, taken it literally and construed it as a threat of revolutionary

violence: "We heard him saying: 'I will demolish this Sanctuary made by hands, and in the course of three days will build another not made by hands.'" It was a palpable perversion, and the court recognised the futility of going before the procurator with so flimsy a charge.

All the while the Lord stood silent, offering no defence. Indeed none was needed, since the allegations of His accusers refuted themselves. It seemed as though the case were breaking down for lack of evidence. If only He would speak, He might incriminate Himself; and Caiaphas, starting from his judgment-seat, menacingly confronted Him. "You are answering nothing! What," he demanded, "of the witness which these are bearing against you?" It was a shameless attempt at intimidation, and Jesus met it with disdainful silence. What could the baffled tyrant do? A device occurred to him. The idea was abroad that the prisoner was the Messiah, the Promised Deliverer, and that He would presently announce Himself as the King of the Jews; and if this were His own claim, then He might reasonably be delated for treasonable designs. But then so unspiritual was the Messianic ideal of His day and so false the expectation which it had created, that He had shrunk more and more from Messianic ascriptions and it was doubtful whether He had claimed Messiahship or no. Caiaphas would now challenge an express declaration. "I put you on oath," said he, "by the Living God to tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

It was an adroit stratagem. He was indeed the Messiah, and had He kept silence, He would have been false to His commission. "Have it so," He answered.

At such a claim from a helpless captive, a poor Galilean, a derisive murmur would pass round the court. They little dreamed, those insolent rulers, who He was or in what far other guise they would one day behold Him. "I tell you," said He, surveying their scornful faces, "by and by you will see the Son of Man  
Ps. cx. i;  
 Dan. vii. 'seated at the right hand' of power and  
13. 'coming with the clouds of heaven.' "

It was required by the Rabbinical law that one who heard blasphemy should rend his garments in token of horror. "Blasphemy!" cried Caiaphas, and rent his garments. In truth there was no horror in his heart but rather exultation; for he had achieved his purpose. "What further need have we of witnesses? See, you have heard the blasphemy. What is your opinion?" It was the formal demand for the judgment of the court; and sentence of death was passed.

It was ordained by the Jewish law that in a trial on a capital charge, whereas, if the prisoner were found innocent, his acquittal should be forthwith pronounced, on the other hand, if he were found guilty, his sentence should be delayed until next morning, and the judges must pass the rest of the day in mourning and fasting. But in their unholy triumph our Lord's judges ignored that gracious ordinance. They tumultuously acclaimed Him guilty and sentenced Him on the instant. And worse still: forgetful alike of their own dignity and of the majesty of their august court, those grave and reverend signiors compassed the helpless prisoner with coarse contumely. Abetted by their officers, they spat upon His holy face; they blindfolded Him and buffeted Him and cried: "Divine for us, Messiah! Who is it that smote you?"

The shameful scene was of short duration, since they were eager to arraign Him before the procurator and have Him done to death. So He was again taken in charge and conducted from the Hall of Hewn Stone on His way to the Prætorium, the procurator's official residence, formerly the palace of Herod, on the western side of the city ; and the Sanhedrists followed after. As they were leaving the Hall, they were startled by a wild apparition. It was the miserable traitor. It had happened with him as with many another criminal—with Nero, for example, of whom it is told that he ruthlessly compassed the assassination of his mother Agrippina and “when the crime was at last accomplished, he realised its portentous guilt, and for the rest of the night, now silent and stupefied, now and still oftener starting up in terror, bereft of reason, he awaited the dawn as if it would bring with it his doom.” And even so, when Judas saw the Master in His enemies' hands, he realised what he had done and was stricken with remorse. Was it too late ? Might he not even yet cancel his infamous bargain with the Chief Priests ? With the accursed shekels in his hand he betook himself to the Hall of Hewn Stone, and waited there till the prisoner was led forth ; and then when Caiaphas and old Annas and the other Chief Priests *emeriti* appeared, he confronted them. “I sinned,” he cried, “in betraying innocent blood ! ” and producing the money, would have paid it back. But they brushed him aside. “What is it to us ? ” said they ; “you will see to it,” and would have passed on. But he pursued them with wild importunities till, as they crossed the Temple-court, they reached the Sanctuary, and to be rid of

him they retreated into the Holy Place. Ere they could close the door against him, he hurled the shekels after them, and went away and hanged himself.

They gathered up the coins, and by and by at their leisure they deliberated what should be done with them. They were the price of blood, and it would have been impiety to put them into the Temple treasury ; and at length they resolved to devote them to what seemed a fitting service. To the south of the city lay a disused clay-bed known as " The Potter's Field." It was good for nothing and a blot upon the landscape, and they purchased it with the thirty pieces of silver and turned it into a burial-place for Gentiles who chanced to die in the Holy City. The unhallowed spot was styled *Akeldama*, " The Field of Blood " ; and it was still there in St. Jerome's day more than three centuries later—an abiding memorial of the ghastly tragedy of the traitor's end.

A ghastly tragedy indeed it was ; and it is no wonder that it was soon invested with imaginary horror. An example of the legends which arose is that gruesome story in the Book of Acts, parenthetically  
Ac. i.  
18, 19. intruded into the speech which Peter made in proposing the election of a successor to Judas. What of this story, so widely different from the tale which the Evangelist tells ? In truth it is no part of the sacred narrative. Originally a reader's note on the margin of his manuscript, it was, as so frequently happened in the transcription of ancient books, incorporated with the text by a later copyist ; and its value is that, like other legends still more gruesome which are preserved in early Christian literature, it shows us what horror the traitor's end inspired.

## THE TRIAL :

### (II) BEFORE THE ROMAN PROCURATOR

Mt. xxvii. 11-30 ; Mk. xv. 1-19 ; Lk. xxiii. 1-25 ; Jo. xviii. 28-xix. 16.

It was a heavy misfortune for the imperial province of Judæa when in the year 25 B.C. Pontius Pilate was appointed its procurator. Arrogant, pitiless, and overbearing, he was ill adapted for dealing with a people so tenacious of their traditions, so sensitive to insult, so reckless in defiance ; and no sooner had he assumed office than he provoked them to implacable antagonism. They had an inveterate abhorrence of images, and his predecessors, scrupulous in eschewing needless offence, had refrained from displaying in the Holy City the military standards emblazoned with the Emperor's effigy. But Pilate disdained what seemed to him a weak compliance with a contemptible superstition, and when the troops went to winter there, he ordered that they should carry their standards into Jerusalem. It was night when they made their entry, but in the morning the impious emblems were seen planted on the citadel hard by the Temple. The indignant Jews hastened in large numbers to Cæsarea, the official capital of the province, and for five days they besieged the procurator with unavailing entreaties. At length on the sixth day he accorded them an audience in the race-course, where he had a military detachment privily stationed ; and when they renewed their



protestations, he signalled to the soldiers, and they surrounded the suppliants and threatened them with instant death unless they forbore their clamour and went peaceably home. He expected that they would be terrified into submission ; but he little knew as yet what manner of men he had to deal with. They cast themselves on the ground and, baring their necks, declared that they had rather die than endure the transgression of their sacred Law.

The procurator had overreached himself. He durst not fulfil his threat and so kindle a conflagration in his province. He bade the soldiers sheathe their blades and issued an order that the standards be removed. It was an ignominious and fatal *dénouement*. He had committed the ruinous blunder of announcing an ultimatum which he could not execute ; and from that hour his authority was broken. He was at the mercy of his resentful subjects. They perceived that he feared the Emperor's displeasure and that they need only clamour and threaten insurrection in order to overbear him.

It was a luckless inauguration of the procurator's administration, and his relations with his subjects had become more and more difficult during the interval of fully three years which have now elapsed. It had been a time of corruption, oppression, and cruelty requited with indignant hatred ; and the unhappy procurator's embarrassment had recently been aggravated by a quarrel with his neighbour Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa. Probably the occasion was that atrocity which he had perpetrated some eight or nine months ago, when he slew a company of Galilean worshippers in the Holy City. Being

Cf. Lk.  
xiii. 1.

Galileans, they were subjects of Antipas, and he would naturally resent the outrage.

It boded ill for the issue of our Lord's trial that the decision rested with an arbiter so embarrassed. Even were he minded to do justice, he durst not. Already a report of his maladministration had reached the Emperor and had earned him a stern reprimand, and further trouble would ensure his recall and disgrace. He was at the mercy of those fanatical Jews, and they knew it and meant to have their way.

They showed it at the very outset. Since it was shortly after 3 A.M. when the Sanhedrin convened, it would be scarce 5 when the hasty trial ended and they adjourned to the Prætorium. Business indeed began early in the sultry East. Even at Rome clients appeared at the houses of their patrons at 6 A.M., and the law-courts sat from 8 to 9; and in Judæa still earlier hours were kept. But even there 5 A.M. was an untimely hour for business, and the Sanhedrists evinced their small esteem for their procurator in thus early presenting themselves and demanding his attention. And they carried their insolence still farther. A heathen dwelling was ceremonially unclean, and had they entered the Prætorium they would have been unclean for the remainder of that day, which had begun at sunset on the previous day and lasted till sunset that evening. And thus they would have been incapacitated, as the Evangelist observes, for <sup>Jo. xviii.</sup> "eating the passover"—a phrase denoting <sup>28.</sup> not merely the Paschal Supper which they had already eaten, but the sacrificial thankoffering (*chagigah*) which they had still to present that afternoon. Their fitting course was to postpone the trial until the Feast was

ended ; but they were eager for the Lord's condemnation, and with undisguised insolence they would not enter the Prætorium but stayed outside before the gateway and summoned the procurator to come forth and deal with them there.

It shows how he stood in awe of them that he obeyed the summons. Chafing at the indignity, he came out and demanded their errand : " What accusation are you bringing against this fellow ? " " Unless," they answered loftily, " he had been a criminal, we would not have delivered him to you." " You take him," said he impatiently, " and judge him by your law." " It is not allowable for us," was their curt rejoinder, " to put any one to death." It was a significant intimation : they had already judged Him by their own law and sentenced Him to death, and they had come to have their sentence ratified.

And therewith they presented their formal indictment : " We found this fellow perverting our nation, prohibiting the giving of tribute to Cæsar, and alleging himself to be Messiah, a king." Observe their unscrupulous ingenuity. The Lord's offence was indeed that He had " alleged Himself to be Messiah," and on that count the Sanhedrin had pronounced Him guilty of blasphemy. But a charge of blasphemy would not lie before a Roman tribunal, and so in delating Him to the procurator they gave it a political colour. It was easily done, since in those days the Messiah was conceived as a national deliverer ; and, shamelessly oblivious alike of patriotism and of religion, they arraigned Him as a plotter of treason against the Emperor.

It was a grave charge, and Pilate durst not make

light of it. Bidding the guards conduct the prisoner into the Prætorium, he retired thither and proceeded to examine Him. Evidently he was impressed by the Lord's bearing—so weary and dishevelled by rough handling yet so calm and withal so majestic. Surely this was no wild adventurer! "You," he said—"are you 'the King of the Jews'?" It was courteously spoken, and it deserved a courteous reply. Yet what could our Lord say? A direct affirmation would have required much explanation which Pilate could hardly have understood. "Is it on your own account," He answered, "that you say this, or did others tell it you of Me?" The suggestion that he had been in communication with those odious fanatics nettled the procurator. "Am I a Jew?" he cried. "Your own nation and the Chief Priests delivered you to me. What have you done?" Some explanation was due alike to Pilate and to our Lord Himself. He could not abjure His Messianic claim, but He assured the procurator that it involved no treason: "My Kingdom does not belong to this world. Had My Kingdom belonged to this world, My attendants had striven to prevent My being delivered to the Jews. As it is, My Kingdom lies not here." "So," said Pilate, "you are a king—you!" "So be it" He answered. "It is for this that I have been born and for this that I have come into the world—that I may testify to the truth. Every one who belongs to the truth hearkens to My voice."

Ah! now Pilate thought he understood. He had heard this sort of thing before. Was it not a paradox of the Stoic philosophy that "the wise man is a king"? Plainly the prisoner was merely one of those harmless

dreamers who were the jest of shrewd, practical Romans. "What is truth?" said he with a laugh; and, bidding the guards follow with the prisoner, he strode out to the gateway and confronted the Sanhedrists and a curious crowd which had assembled. "I find in him," he announced, "no fault."

That was his verdict. The prisoner was pronounced innocent, and He should forthwith have been acquitted; but the Sanhedrists raised an angry protest, insisting that He was a dangerous person. He was stirring up the people by His teaching. He had begun in Galilee, and now He was there in Judæa carrying on His propaganda. Pilate would gladly have disregarded their clamour, but situated as he was he durst not. The prisoner was standing by silent, and he appealed to Him in the hope that He would refute the charges: "Do you not hear what charges they are bringing against you?" It was a poor, cowardly evasion. He ought to have defied them and done justice at all hazards; and to his astonishment the prisoner, who a little ago had been so frank with him, now maintained a scornful silence.

What should he do? Amid the clamour of the Sanhedrists he had caught their reference to Galilee, and this suggested to him a way of escape. If the prisoner were a Galilean, He was a subject of Herod Antipas, and the Tetrarch was then at Jerusalem, attending the Passover. It would be a graceful act to refer the case to Antipas. It would be some atonement for the recent massacre of Galilean worshippers and appease the Tetrarch's resentment; and besides it would relieve the procurator of his present embarrassment. Accordingly he despatched the

prisoner to the old Palace of the Asmonæans where Antipas resided when he visited Jerusalem, and the Sanhedrists followed thither to prosecute the case before him.

It was a welcome surprise to the Tetrarch when our Lord was ushered into his presence ; for ever since he had spilt the blood of John the Baptist he had been haunted by the memory of the crime, and of late the fame of our Lord's Galilean ministry had created in his mind the superstitious notion that He might perhaps be the martyr raised to life again, and he had been anxious to see

Cf. Matt.  
xiv. 1, 2 ;  
Mk. vi. 14-  
16 ; Lk. ix.  
7-9.

Him and ascertain who He really was. Now at length he had the opportunity which he desired ; and it was a relief to him when he discovered the baselessness of his apprehension. He proceeded to question the prisoner regarding His teaching and proposed that He should work a miracle before him. Our Lord treated the licentious and cowardly tyrant with merited disdain. He vouchsafed no answer to his questions and solicitations, and when the eager Sanhedrists poured out their accusations, He maintained a dignified silence. It was not thus that the Tetrarch was wont to be treated, and he took an ignoble revenge. He procured a purple robe from his wardrobe and arrayed the prisoner therewith in derision of His regal claim, and he and his men-at-arms paid Him mock homage. Then, when he had enough of the stupid sport, he dismissed his visitors, and the prisoner was conducted back to the *Prætorium* in His motley bravery.

It was a sore annoyance to Pilate when the case was thus thrown back on his hands. There was nothing for it but that he should pronounce judgment,



and on this distasteful errand he betook himself to the gateway and confronted the expectant Sanhedrists and the attendant crowd. It was a punctilio of Roman law that no sentence was valid unless pronounced from a tribunal, and since trials had frequently to be conducted not in a regular law-court but, as occasion required, in market-places or theatres or on the high-way, a magistrate was provided with a portable tribunal. Such a tribunal had now been set at the

gateway of the Prætorium, on the *Gabbatha*,  
Cf. Jo. xix. 13; Mt. xxvii. 19. the broad and richly tessellated landing  
 whence the steps descended to the street.

On this Pilate took his seat, and proceeded to deliver his verdict : " You brought this man to me on a charge of seducing the people ; and, look you, on examining him before you I found in this man none of the faults of which you accused him. No, nor did Herod ; for he sent him back to us, and, look you, nothing deserving of death has been committed by him." Here he paused. The only reasonable sequel to so emphatic a declaration of the prisoner's innocence was a full acquittal, and this Pilate would fain have pronounced. " I will therefore," he should have concluded, " release him " ; but the sight of those lowering faces intimidated him, and he suggested a feeble and unrighteous compromise : " I will therefore chastise him and release him."

It would have been greeted with a storm of angry protest but for an opportune interruption. It was a politic ordinance of the imperial government that in honour of the Feast the procurator should at every Passover season gratify the populace of Jerusalem by granting a free pardon to any prisoner whom they

might name ; and just at that moment a noisy throng, the rabble of the city, came surging up to the gateway to claim their annual privilege. Here Pilate recognised an opportunity to gain his end. It chanced that there was then lying in prison under sentence of death a criminal who by a curious coincidence was also named Jesus.<sup>1</sup> He was a notorious personage. He was a brigand, one of those ruffians who had their fastnesses in the wilderness of Judæa and infested the Ascent of Blood, plundering travellers Cf. Lk. x. 30. between Jerusalem and Jericho ; and he had been taken red-handed in a sanguinary affray. It intensified the horror wherewith he was regarded that he was the son of a venerable Rabbi, whence he was generally known as *Bar Abba*, “ the son of the Father,” that is, the Rabbi.

Here was Pilate’s opportunity. “ Which of the two,” said he, “ will you have me release to you—Jesus the Bar Abba or Jesus the Christ, as he is called ? ” It was an astute stratagem. A moment more, and it would surely have succeeded. Bar Abba had been a public terror and our Lord the popular hero, and the rabble would certainly have chosen Him and borne Him off in triumph. A moment more, and He would have been free ; but just then a message was brought to Pilate. It was from his wife Claudia Procula. During those days which she had spent in the city, she had been told of Jesus, perhaps by her servants ; and it may be that she had seen Him and even, as she passed, heard Him discoursing to the multitude.

<sup>1</sup> On the testimony of authorities earlier than our oldest MSS. Origen had this reading before him and disapproved it because he thought it unfitting that a brigand should bear the sacred name.

Her womanly heart had been touched, and on learning the previous night that the Jewish rulers had obtained a troop of soldiers for His arrest she had been troubled. Her solicitude had shaped itself into a disquieting dream ; and on waking and finding that her lord had been summoned early and what the business was, she took alarm and penned a hasty message to him : " Have nothing to do with that righteous man. I have been greatly troubled on his account in a dream." It would take Pilate no long time to unseal the missive and read and re-read it ; but it was long enough for the mischief to be done. The malignant Sanhedrists, seeing how their prey was like to be snatched from them, prompted the leaders of the rabble ; and when Pilate looked up and repeated his question : " Which of the two will you have me release to you ? " they answered to his chagrin " The Bar Abba." " Then," he objected, " what am I to do with Jesus the Christ ? " " Crucify him " they cried. " Why," he remonstrated, " what ill has he done ? " The choice lay with the rabble, and after the manner of their sort they resented dictation. They all took up the cry and shouted lustily " Crucify him ! "

What could the unhappy procurator do but acquiesce ? He might, he should, have defied the Sanhedrists and acquitted the prisoner whom he had pronounced innocent ; but that would have been his own undoing, and he durst not face it. To save himself from the doom which overtook him six years later when Vitellius the legate of Syria sent him to Rome to answer for his maladministration, he yielded to clamour and perpetrated a judicial crime. " He released at their desire one who for riot and murder

had been cast into prison and delivered Jesus to their will." It was, as he viewed it, an odious necessity; yet, dissemble it as he might, his conscience was ill at ease, and he vainly sought to silence its rebuke by a dramatic repudiation of responsibility. He had a basin and towel fetched him, and in sight of the Sanhedrists and the mob he washed his hands. "I am innocent of this man's blood" said he: "you will see to it." "His blood," they answered, "be upon us and upon our children!" Did their children recall that impious defiance forty years later when Jerusalem perished amid fire and blood and tears?

Crucifixion was the doom of the vilest criminals, and the inhuman custom was that after sentence they should be scourged and mocked. Our Lord was accordingly conducted from the Gabbatha into the courtyard of the Prætorium, and there six lictors took Him in hand. They stripped Him, bound Him to the whipping post, and plied the scourge on His back and shoulders. It was an horrible instrument, aptly nicknamed "a scorpion"—a knout of leathern Cf. 1 Ki. xii. 11. thongs loaded with sharp spikes which at every stroke cut into the quivering flesh till the sinews and bones were laid bare. When the brutal work was done, they unbound Him and made sport of Him. Over His bleeding shoulders they cast the Tetrarch's purple robe; from the fuel-heap they took twigs of the thorny *sidr* tree which still flourishes so luxuriantly in the Jordan valley, and, weaving a chaplet, set it on His head and put a reed in His hand for a sceptre. And then they paid Him mock homage, kneeling before Him and saluting Him:

"Hail, King of the Jews!" And presently they spat upon Him and buffeted Him, and one snatched the reed from His hand and smote His thorn-crowned head.

Steeled as he was by custom, Pilate was moved; and it occurred to him that perhaps, if they saw the prisoner now, those merciless Jews would be softened and let Him go. Bidding the soldiers conduct Him thither, he strode to the gateway. "See," he cried, "I am bringing him out to you. Understand that I find no fault——"<sup>1</sup> He was about to say "in him" when he was interrupted by the emergence of the guards supporting the prisoner, faint and bleeding, and wearing the thorny crown and the purple robe. "Look you!" he cried, "the man." It was an appeal to their compassion. Surely they would relent and proceed no further! Evidently not only the fickle rabble but, at the moment, even the Pharisees were touched; for it was from the merciless Chief Priests and their obsequious officers that the response came. "Crucify! crucify!" they roared. "Take him you," cried Pilate in disgust, "and crucify him; for I find no fault in him"; but they sternly held him to his task. The execution of the sentence lay with him and not with them. "We have a law, and by the law he must die, because he made himself the Son of God."

"The Son of God" was a Jewish name for the Messiah, and this is all that they meant; but the designation was novel to Pilate and he construed it after the heathen fashion. Already he had recognised in our Lord a spirit which was not of this world.

<sup>1</sup> The original reading on textual evidence.

Could it be, he reflected, that after all there was truth in those old fables of deities appearing among men in human guise, and that this mysterious Cf. Ac. xiv. personage, so meek yet so majestic, was <sup>11, 12.</sup> indeed a heavenly visitant? The idea startled him, and he conducted the prisoner within. "Whence are you?" he eagerly inquired. It was a sorry part that Pilate had played all through the drama which was now so nearly ended, and never, not even when he cowered before those hateful Jews and to save himself consented to a shameful wrong, had he shown so mean and base as now shaken by superstitious dread. The Lord surveyed him disdainfully and vouchsafed no reply. "You do not speak to me!" blustered the wretch. "Do you not know that I have authority to release you and I have authority to crucify you?" It ill became one who had played so pusillanimous a part to vaunt his authority thus; and the Lord spoke out and told him what his authority was worth. He was in truth nothing but a blind instrument in the hands of Almighty God, accomplishing unwittingly His sovereign purpose. "You had no authority against Me—none, unless it had been given you from above. Therefore," He added, hastening after His wont to make generous allowance, "the man who delivered Me to you has greater sin." He meant the Chief Priest who, knowing the Scriptures, had nevertheless rejected the Saviour to whom they testified.

Bewildered yet impressed, Pilate returned to the gateway and pleaded for the prisoner's life. But they would not listen. "If," they shouted, "you release this fellow, you are no friend to Cæsar. Every one who makes himself a king is a rebel against Cæsar."



It was a significant menace. Truly it would fare ill with the procurator were it reported at Rome that he had made light of treason. He would bite his lip; yet he could not refrain from a retort. He led the prisoner to the tribunal and, seating Him there as on a throne in His mock regalities, he turned to his tormentors. Would they insult their nation by treating seriously the pretensions of that broken, helpless creature? "See!" he cried, "your King." "Away with him! away with him!" they roared; "crucify him!" "Am I to crucify your King?" he sneered. "We have no King but Cæsar."

It was the Chief Priests that spoke; and surely there was a flush of shame on the faces of the patriotic Pharisees when they heard the dominion of the heathen tyrant thus confessed, and confessed, moreover, on that day of all the days of the year. It was, observes the Evangelist, "Friday of the Passover";<sup>1</sup> and only last evening they had been celebrating the sacred Feast which celebrated the deliverance of their fathers from the land of bondage. Surely the hearts of the Pharisees would burn within them at that ignoble confession; but whatever they may have felt, they held their peace and raised no protest; and Pilate delivered the prisoner to His doom.

<sup>1</sup> Not "the Preparation of the Passover." Preparation (*paraskeue*) was the Jewish name for our Friday, the sixth day of the week, when preparation was made for the Sabbath, the Day of Rest. The Jewish name was taken over by the primitive Christians, and it is still the name for Friday on the Greek Calendar. Cf. Mk. xv. 42, where *paraskeue* is defined as *prosabbaton*, "the day before the Sabbath."

## THE CRUCIFIXION

Mt. xxvii. 31-66; Mk. xv. 20-47; Lk. xxiii. 26-56;  
Jo. xix. 17-42.

It was now, says St. John, "about the sixth hour," that is, according to his Asian reckoning, 6 A.M.; and the soldiers proceeded to execute the sentence. They divested the prisoner of the purple robe and put on His own garments. He was not the only victim that morning. Two others were to be crucified with Him—two brigands, probably accomplices of Bar Abba who, but for the craft of the High Priests, would now have shared their doom. It was the custom that the *cruciarius*, as the victim was called in Latin, should carry his cross to the place of execution, and also that a placard should be borne thither before him and there fixed over his head—a white board whereon were inscribed in staring black letters his name and his crime. From a pile stacked ready in the courtyard three crosses were taken and laid on the victims' shoulders, and three placards were brought to the tribunal where Pilate was waiting for them. On two of them he would write the man's name and after it "brigand," and on the third he should in like manner have written "Jesus, a rebel"; but here he saw his chance of taking a malicious revenge on his tormentors, and he wrote large and clear:

JESUS THE NAZARENE THE KING OF THE JEWS

And that all might read it and understand it he wrote it in Hebrew and Greek and Latin :

יֵשׁוּעַ הַנָּצְרִי מֶלֶךְ הַיְּהוּדִים

ΙΗΣΟΥΣ Ο ΝΑΖΩΡΑΙΟΣ Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ

IESUS NAZARENUS REX IUDÆORUM

The Chief Priests raised an indignant protest. "Do not write," they cried, "'The King of the Jews' but 'He said: I am King of the Jews.''" "What I have written I have written" he answered disdainfully, and let it stand.

And now the procession was formed. The soldiers escorting the three cross-laden victims emerged from the gateway and descended the steps to the street, and the crowd fell aside to let them pass and then closed in and followed after them. Where were the eleven all the while? One of them at least had been present at the trial and had watched its progress with anguished interest. It was John, "the disciple whom Cf. Jo. xix. Jesus loved." He saw the dear Master leave 17 R.V. the Prætorium staggering beneath His burden, but he did not join the procession. There were anxious hearts waiting to learn the issue—a little company of Galilean women who had come up to the Feast and Cf. Jo. xix. were lodging together in the city. These 25; Mt. xxvii. 56; were Mary the Lord's mother and her sister Mk. xv. 40. Salome, John's own mother, and Mary wife of Clopas (Alphæus) and mother of James the Little; and with them was Mary the Magdalene who, when her brother and sister fled from the wrath of the rulers, had resolutely remained. And now that the issue was determined and John saw the Master on His way to death, he hastened to tell these loving

souls the mournful tidings and comfort them as he might.

The procession moved northward through the city ; for that was the way to the place of execution—a skull-shaped knoll a quarter of a mile outside the Gate of Damascus, now known as Jeremiah's Grotto and then, from its configuration, as Golgotha, in Latin *Calvaria*, " the Skull." First came the victims and their guards urging them forward with scourge and spear-point ; then, headed by the exultant Sanhedrists, the jostling throng. All the rabble of the city would be there, eager to feast their eyes on the ghastly spectacle ; but there were many besides who had sorrow in their hearts and would have expressed it had they dared—the folk who loved Jesus for the gracious words which He had spoken and the gracious works which He had wrought in their midst.

Exhausted by all that He had undergone, the Lord struggled on beneath His load as far as the gate of the city, and there, tradition says, He sank Cf. Mt. xxvii. 32. beneath it. He could carry it no farther, and the soldiers, after the military usage, commandeered for the service the first suitable man they espied—a Hellenistic Jew named Simon from Cyrene, a city of North Africa where there was a large Jewish colony. He had come to Jerusalem for the Feast and was lodging out in the country and was now on his way to morning prayer in the Temple. Just as he approached the gate the procession came up, and he stood aside till it should pass ; and the soldiers arrested him and laid the Lord's cross on his shoulders. At the moment it was a sore annoyance and a grievous humiliation for Simon, yet afterwards he would recall it with

reverent thankfulness ; for it was his introduction to his Saviour. At all events, in telling the story some forty years later, when Simon would be dead and gone, St. Mark identified him as " the father of Alexander and Rufus." Evidently these were well-known Christians at that day, and it may be that the latter is that Rufus whom, in the personal message to the Church at Ephesus appended to his great encyclical on Justification by Faith, St. Paul so highly commends along with his devoted mother.

While the guards were thus employed, several of the women in the crowd gathered round the Lord, sobbing and wailing in womanly compassion. " Daughters of Jerusalem," said He, " weep not for Me ! Rather weep for yourselves and for your children." His suffering was near an end, but theirs was all before them. Jerusalem's calamity was fast approaching. " Days are coming in which they will say : ' Blessed are the barren, the wombs which have borne no children, and the breasts which have nourished none.' " Even in His hour of anguish it was for others that He cared, even for the city of His murderers.

Resuming its march, the procession reached Golgotha, and there on the summit in view of the multitude thronging its slope and the travellers on the northern highway which wound along its base, a quaternion of soldiers addressed themselves to their brutal task. First they planted the upright of each cross in the ground ; then they stripped each victim and, laying him on his back over the transom, proceeded to nail his outstretched hands to either extremity. Here their operations were stayed for a brief space. Cruci-

fixion was not a Jewish punishment. It seems to have been invented by that cruel race, the Phœnicians, and the Romans borrowed it from the Carthaginians, a Phœnician colony, in the course of the Punic Wars. They did not, however, inflict it on their own people. They reserved it for slaves and provincials; and the Jews keenly resented it. Being conquered subjects of the Roman Empire, they were powerless to prevent it, but they felt the horror of it; and it is told in the Talmud that there was in Jerusalem a society of charitable ladies who, taking as their motto the ancient precept: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter <sup>Pr. xxxi.</sup> 6. in soul," provided for deserving sufferers a narcotic of medicated wine to stupefy them and dull their sensibility. The merciful draught was presented to our Lord and, parched with thirst, He took it and put it to His lips; but when He tasted it and recognised what it was, He put it aside.

Why would He not drink it? It was not that, after the manner of the Indian gymnosophists and the mediæval ascetics, He supposed that there was any merit, any atoning efficacy, or anything well pleasing to God in mere physical suffering. The reason was rather that He had two companions in misery, and for those ruffians there was no compassion when they were brought to justice and doomed to suffer on the cross "the due reward of their deeds." For them no anæsthetic had been provided; and when the merciful potion was at His lips and He saw them eyeing it wistfully, our Lord put it from Him. With a chivalry surpassing Sir Philip Sidney's on the field of Zutphen He would not accept a relief which was denied to His



companions in affliction. Whom all besides contemned He pitied.

The soldiers resumed their interrupted task. It was usual for the victims, as the nails were driven through their palms, to shriek and entreat and curse and spit at their torturers; and a cry broke from our Lord's lips. But it was not a shriek or an entreaty or an imprecation: it was a prayer—an intercession for those rude soldiers who were doing their brutal office as they had done it many a time before, never dreaming what an impiety they were now committing. "Father," He moaned, "forgive them; for they know not what they are doing." The cross-beams with their writhing burdens were hoisted on the uprights, our Lord midstmost and a brigand on either hand; and then the victims' feet were made fast, whether by nails driven Cf. **xx.** 20, through them or, as St. John's narrative 25, 27. suggests, by cords binding them to the posts—a fashion which, though kindlier at the moment, only prolonged the mortal agony.

The work was now done, and after fixing the placards on the projections of the uprights the soldiers hastened to a congenial office—the allotment of the victims' garments which, by a usage that survived among ourselves until quite recent days, were recognised as their executioners' perquisites. There were four executioners, and when they came to the division of our Lord's garments, a difficulty arose. For a Jew had five articles of dress—a cloak (*himation*); a tunic (*chiton*), a short-sleeved vest reaching down to the knees; a girdle, encompassing the waist over the tunic; sandals; and a turban (*tsaniph*). Each of the soldiers took a garment, one the cloak, another the

girdle, another the sandals, and the fourth the turban ; but how should they dispose of the superfluous tunic ? The obvious way, which perhaps they had followed in apportioning the brigands' garments, was to slit it into four pieces useful for patching ; but they observed a peculiarity in the Lord's tunic. Tradition says that it was a gift of Mary's, and she had spun it all of a piece without seams. This was a Galilean fashion, but it was a novelty to those Roman soldiers. They had never seen the like, and thinking it a pity to rend it, they agreed to cast lots for it.

As they sat chaffering thus, their victims were hanging in pain, and all eyes were directed to the middle cross. The Jewish rulers had gathered beneath it, and were taunting the helpless sufferer. " He saved others," they jeered : " himself he cannot save. He is the King of Israel : let him now descend from the cross, and we will believe in him." The coarse rabble abetted them, and even His fellow-sufferers, thinking to ingratiate themselves with the rulers and perhaps even yet, as sometimes happened, obtain a respite. And presently, when they had settled their business, the soldiers joined in the game. They had with them a beaker of " vinegar," Jo. xix. 29. the thin, sour wine which slaves drank and also soldiers on duty, and they were refreshing Lk. xxiii. 36. themselves after their exertions. And as they drank, they held up their cups and derisively drank to " His Majesty."

In the midst of this base sport a little company appeared on the scene—John and those four women. He had told them the heavy tidings, and despite all remonstrance nothing would content Mary but that

she should go to Calvary and be near the son of her love in His mortal anguish. They all went with her. And now they arrive and, pressing through the throng, take their stand beneath His cross. Their appearance was welcome to Him; for it afforded Him an opportunity of discharging His last earthly care. He had been thinking how Mary would fare when He was gone. She had indeed other sons, but remember what manner of men they were. It is no small evidence of His heavenly origin that, though born in the same home which sheltered His childhood and brought up in His companionship, they were men of coarse fibre, narrow-minded, unimaginative, and misjudging Jews, until at length their souls were mastered by His transforming grace. He seemed to them a crazed enthusiast, and they had actually imbued Mary with Mk. iii. 20, their crass opinion. Once, hearing tidings of 21, 31-35. His activities at Capernaum, they had concluded that He was mad, and they and she had betaken themselves thither with the design of laying hold of Him and putting Him under restraint. What wonder then that in His dying agony He was loath to leave her in their charge? When He saw her there leaning on the disciple whom He loved, He committed her to his care. "Woman," said He, "see, your son: see, your mother." He meant that John should take His place and thenceforth be a son to Mary. Nor was His trust belied. Mary was overcome by emotion, and John conveyed her from the distressful scene, and from that day she was an honoured inmate of his home.

It was a moving incident, nor was it lost upon the spectators. It appealed especially to one of the two

brigands, stirring in his breast memories of tenderness. He held his peace, and when his companion persisted in his ribaldry, he remonstrated with him. "Do you not even fear God? You are sharing his doom. And we deserve it; for we are getting the due reward of our deeds; but as for him—he did nothing outrageous." And then, turning his eyes to the meek face beside him, "Jesus," said he, "remember me when you come to your kingdom." A little ago it would have been a taunt, a mock petition to "the King of the Jews"; but the tone of the supplication bespoke a change of heart. The dying sinner had perceived the grace and majesty of his fellow-sufferer, and acknowledged, though he could not understand, His claims. And his ignorant trust had its reward. "Verily I tell you," the Lord answered, "to-day will you be with Me in Paradise." In the Jewish phraseology of those days Paradise was the highest Cf. 2 Cor. xii. 4. of the Seven Heavens, "the dwelling place of the Great Glory," the immediate presence of God; and the promise was at once intelligible and exceeding comfortable to that poor, ignorant penitent. It was an assurance that when his soul parted from his tortured body, it would be with its Saviour in God's good keeping.

It is worth while pausing here to observe that we owe the record of this incident to St. Luke. St. Matthew and St. Mark tell how both the brigands joined in taunting the Lord, but they are silent regarding the blessed sequel. Surely had they known of it, they would have told it; nor is the explanation far to seek. Evidently when John conveyed Mary away, the other three women remained. They

witnessed the brigand's repentance, and heard his prayer and the Lord's gracious response; and it would be from their lips that St. Luke heard the story in the Cf. Lk. course of the diligent research which he made i. 1-4. when he had in view the writing of a fuller record of the Lord's ministry. Already it has appeared how he resembled the Lord in his sympathy with despised women-folk, and his learning this gracious story from Salome and the two Marys is an example of his constant manner.

Thus passed three hours. It was nine o'clock when the Lord was crucified, and now it was noon. The Mk. xv. unseasonable cold of the previous night had<sup>25.</sup> Cf. Jo. been ominous, and it proved to have been xviii. 18. the harbinger of an earthquake, a dread and frequent visitation in the region of Syria. Just sixty years previously one of unusual violence had occurred in Judæa. That disastrous day, when ten thousand had perished in the ruin of their houses, was fresh in remembrance; and now when a thick haze overspread the landscape, concealing the sun, a solemn hush fell on the multitude. At length at three o'clock the silence was broken by a cry from the central cross. What marvel that amid the sore anguish of our Lord's mortal flesh and the desolation of His heart that faith in His Father's love, that trust in His Father's will, which had been so sure and stedfast all the days of His earthly pilgrimage, was for a moment shaken? *Eli, Eli*, He cried, echoing the Ps. xxii. 1. psalmist's plaint in the mother-tongue so sweet in sorrow to Jewish lips, *lama sabachthani*, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" For the first, the only time in all His

earthly life His vision of God was clouded ; and surely it is well for us that our Incarnate Redeemer suffered that most terrible of human experiences. In truth the Father was never so near Him and never so well pleased in His beloved Son as in that His hour of supreme devotion ; and His exceeding bitter cry is His people's reassurance.

“ It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,  
That, of the lost, no soul should use those words of  
desolation,”

that, when their flesh and their heart fail, they may remember that He passed that way before them and so be of good cheer.

The Jews about the cross would understand that Hebrew sentence, but it puzzled the Roman soldiers *Eli*, “ My God,” suggested to them the name *Elias*, and they fancied that He was calling for a friend. Just then He moaned “ I thirst ” ; and one of them took pity on Him and ran to the beaker of vinegar. “ Let a-be ! ” shouted his comrades, “ let us see if *Elias* comes to save Him ” ; but he persisted in his compassionate purpose. The cross was high, and he could not reach up to the Sufferer ; but he would not be foiled. The mouth of the beaker was stopped not with a cork but, after the ancient fashion, with a sponge ; and this, saturated with the liquor, he took and, fixing it on the point of his javelin,<sup>1</sup> reached it up and moistened the parched lips.

It was the last kindness that our Lord received, and it was precious to Him. It lifted the cloud from His soul. The human pity which it expressed spoke to

<sup>1</sup> Reading in Jo. xix. 29 *hysso*, “ javelin,” for *hyssopo*, “ hyssop.”



Him of the Infinite Compassion, and He leaned thereon in peaceful content. "Father," He prayed, employing

once more the language of Holy Writ, "into Ps. xxxi. 5.

Thine hands I commend My spirit." A sharp, sudden pang shot through His heart, wringing from Him a cry of agony. "It is finished!" He murmured, and His head sank on His breast. "The Son of Man,"

He had once said, "has nowhere to lay down Mt. viii.

20; Lk. ix. His head"; but now, observes the Evangelist, "He laid down His head and sur- 58.

rendered His spirit." At last, because His Jo. xix. 30. work was finished, the unresting Saviour took His rest.

The hush which had fallen on the spectators was rudely broken. The solid earth trembled and heaved beneath them, and the rocks were shaken and rent. It was the dreaded earthquake, and the terrified multitude dispersed and hastened to the city. Presently Calvary was deserted save for the soldiers, who remained at their posts, and Salome and her two companions and several other Galilean women who had been in the crowd watching from afar and now came forward and joined the three. To the rude soldiers, already impressed by what they had seen and heard of our Lord, it seemed as though this latest happening were a supernatural attestation of His claims, and their commander voiced their thoughts. "Truly," he exclaimed, "this man was 'the Son of God'!"

The tremor which had shaken the hill of Calvary was naturally more severely felt in the city with its close-built tenements; and the returning crowd were confronted by a scene of alarm and confusion. One incident especially excited their wonderment. The solid masonry of the Temple had been shaken, and

when the shock passed, the priests found on entering the Sanctuary that the Veil, the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, Ex. xxvi. 31-33. which in Herod's Temple was a magnificent fabric—"a Babylonian curtain brodered with blue and fine linen, scarlet and purple"—had been rent in twain from top to bottom. It was indeed an impressive incident; and, natural though it was, to the believers of early days it justly seemed providentially significant. The Holy of Holies was the Divine Presence-chamber, whereinto only the High Priest might enter once every year on the Day of Atonement, "not without blood"; and the rending of the Veil which closed it in proclaimed to Heb. ix. 7. them the blessed difference which the Lord's Atoning Sacrifice had accomplished. "Having there- Heb. x. 19-22. fore, brethren," it is written, "boldness to enter into the Holies by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a fresh and living way, through the Veil, that is, His flesh, let us approach with a true heart."

Perhaps the only men in Jerusalem who remained unmoved were the Sanhedrists. The earthquake was past, and they addressed themselves to their business. They had indeed no time to lose; for it was Friday afternoon and at sunset the Sabbath would Cf. Dt. xxi. 23. begin, and it would be a desecration of the Holy Day were the criminals' bodies left hanging on the crosses. The desecration would have been specially intolerable on the high Sabbath succeeding the Pass-over. Crucifixion was a lingering doom, and its victims often hung for days ere death released them from their agony unless the end were accelerated by

the cruel mercy of the *crurifragium*, "the breaking of their limbs"—the doing of them to death by blows with a heavy mallet. Accordingly the Sanhedrists waited on Pilate and requested that the victims should be thus despatched. He gave the order and the soldiers executed it. They put the two brigands out of their pain, but in the case of our Lord it was needless. He was already dead; but to make quite sure one of them—traditionally named Longinus—drove his spear into His side.

A strange thing ensued. When the spear was withdrawn, it was followed by a gush of "blood and water." John had returned to Calvary and was standing with the women by the cross, and he witnessed the phenomenon. He could not understand it, and when he told the story long afterwards, he attempted no explanation but simply affirmed the astonishing fact with an assurance that he had seen it with his own eyes. It remained a mystery until near the middle of last century, when an English physician, Dr. Stroud, in his treatise *On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ* presented an explanation which was approved by other physicians no less distinguished, including Professor J. Y. Simpson, whose employment of chloroform has ranked him among the chief benefactors of suffering humanity. The cause of our Lord's death, they tell us, was lesion or rupture of the heart, which happens when the organ is distended by strong emotion until its walls are torn. The agony is intense and utters itself in a piercing shriek; and death ensues more or less swiftly according to the extent of the rupture. Only by a *post-mortem* examination

Mt. xxvii.  
50; Mk.  
xv. 37;  
Lk. xxiii.  
46.

is it possible to ascertain that an actual rupture has taken place; and the evidence then is that the blood has escaped from the interior of the heart into its investing sheath, the *pericardium*, where it separates, after the manner of extravasated blood, into the two elements of *crassamentum* or red clot and limpid *serum*. Precisely this was revealed by that rude *post-mortem* examination—the piercing of His side by the soldier's spear. The point punctured the pericardium, and its withdrawal released the contents—the red clots and the clear serum: “there came forth immediately blood and water.”

And thus in very fact our Lord died of a broken heart—an “o'er fraught heart” swollen with “desperate tides of the whole great world's anguish.”

There was another besides the Sanhedrists who waited on Pilate that afternoon. Where all the while had Nicodemus been—that old Rabbi who had the memorable interview with our Lord on Mount Olivet at the beginning of His ministry, and six months ago had timidly entered a protest on His behalf in the high court? He was a believer at heart though he had never dared to proclaim his faith. And there was another Sanhedrist in like case—Joseph of Arimathæa, the town known of old as Ramathaim-Zophim. They both were members of the Sanhedrin, yet neither had raised his voice that morning against the Lord's condemnation. Indeed their protests would have been unavailing, and probably they had stayed away. But when they saw Him done to death, they were stricken with grief and shame, and with a heroism which surely atoned for their pusillanimity, they resolved that they would now

Jo. iii.  
1-21, vii.  
50-52.

confess Him—now when confession was supremely difficult and might seem useless. One service at least they could render Him. The rule was that the mangled bodies of crucified criminals should be cast into the loathsome pit of Gehenna, the public refuse-depôt. That would be the fate of the unbefriended bodies of the two brigands ; and it would have been the fate also of our Lord's, but Joseph and Nicodemus agreed that they would obtain it and give it an honourable burial. It was a costly undertaking ; for not only were a sepulchre and cerements needed but Pilate had an evil reputation for greed, and they reckoned that they must purchase his permission by a heavy bribe. But they were rich men, and they would gladly bear the expense between them. Joseph, as it happened, owned an orchard on the north-western slope of Olivet close to Calvary, where he had newly hewn a vault in the rock ; and there in his own family burial-place he proposed, in all love and reverence, to lay the Lord's body.

He undertook the errand to the Prætorium, and it proved easier than he had anticipated. Pilate's sin was heavy on his conscience. Evidently Joseph presented himself before the Sanhedrists, and his report was the procurator's first intelligence of what had happened at Calvary. It surprised him to learn that the Lord was so soon dead ; and when Joseph stated his errand and offered the customary bribe, he refused it and, says the Evangelist, not merely " gave him the body " but, as the word signifies and as tradition expressly avers, " made him a free gift of it." Joseph rejoined Nicodemus, who had meanwhile been busy procuring a winding-sheet of fine

Mk. xv. 45.

linen and embalming spices in lavish abundance—an hundred pounds' weight, enough for the burial of a king. Therewith they hastened to Calvary Cf. 2 Chr. and claimed the sacred body from the xvi. 14. soldiers and, aided by the women, conveyed it to the sepulchre and laid it there.



## THE RESURRECTION

Mt. xxviii ; Mk. xvi ; Lk. xxiv (Ac. i. 1-14) ; Jo. xx, xxi ;  
I Cor. xv.

As the record of our Lord's earthly life began with a transcendent miracle, even so it ends. His humanity was a fresh creation : He was begotten of the Holy Spirit in a virgin's womb, " begotten, not of bloods "—the mingled blood of human parents—" nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God."

Ac. i. 3, x. Nor when He died did He " see corruption." 40, 41.

" God raised Him from the dead on the third day," and " He showed Himself alive after His passion Jo. xx. 17 ; to chosen witnesses " ; and thereafter He Col. iii. 1.

ascended to the Father and is enthroned evermore at His right hand, still wearing, transfigured and glorified, the humanity which He wore in the days of His flesh. This is the historic faith of the Christian Church, and it is no late invention. It is proclaimed

in St. Paul's earliest epistle, written in 51 A.D., I Th. i. 10, just two-and-twenty years after the event, iii. 13, iv. 14.

and continually affirmed on the pages of the New Testament within the lifetime of the first generation of believers, and always as a fact of indubitable certainty and universal acceptance.

It is the story of this amazing event as told by the Evangelists that now claims our attention ; and it will be profitable for us, delivering us from much bewilderment and harassing doubt, if at the outset

we consider the nature of the testimonies which they adduce and appreciate their differing values.

The difficulty which immediately confronts us is that those testimonies abound in inconsistencies and contradictions. For example, when Mary the

Magdalene came to the sepulchre, it was, according to St. Matthew, "late on the Sabbath as the first day of the week was breaking," that is, at sunset on the Sabbath

Mt. xxviii.  
1-7; Mk.  
xvi. 1-7;  
Lk. xxiv.  
1-8; Jo.  
xx. 1-12.

when, on the Jewish reckoning, the new day began; according to St. Mark, it was "very early in the morning on the first day of the week when the sun had risen"; according to St. Luke, "at deep dawn on the first day of the week"; and, according to St. John, "on the first day of the week early in the morning while it was yet dark." Again, according to St. Mark and St. Luke, the errand of Mary and her companions was to embalm the Lord's body, whereas, according to St. John, it had already been

Jo. xix. 39,

embalmed at its burial on the Friday evening, <sup>40</sup>.

and he and St. Matthew agree that they came "to see the sepulchre." Once more, according to St. Matthew, after their arrival at the sepulchre there was an earthquake and an angel descended and rolled away the stone and sat on it; according to the other Evangelists, it had already been rolled away when they arrived, and it was within the sepulchre that they saw, according to St. Mark, a single angel and, according to St. Luke and St. John, two angels.

And observe this larger difficulty. In St. Matthew's narrative of the crucifixion it is written that not merely was the Veil of the Sanctuary rent

Mt. xxvii.  
52, 53.

in twain by the earthquake but "the rocks were rent

and the sepulchres were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had been laid to rest were raised and having come forth from the sepulchres after His raising entered into the Holy City and were manifested to many." This story, told by St. Matthew alone, has always been a puzzle. It perplexed St. Augustine, and in one of his epistles he mentions the difficulties which were felt regarding it in his day. The chief is that if those saints were raised when our Lord died on the cross, then, since it was not till the third day after that He was raised, their resurrection preceded

Col. i. 18; His, and thus He was not "the first-born from  
 Rev. i. 5; the dead," "the first-fruits of those who  
 1 Cor. xv. 20.  
 have gone to rest." Two answers have been

proposed. One is that the same difficulty attaches to the other cases of the raising of the widow's son at Nain, Jair's daughter, and Lazarus; but this suggestion only aggravates the difficulty, and besides it overlooks the fact that those three raisings were merely reanimations. Lazarus was not raised with a glorified body. His mortal body was simply restored to life, and by and by it died again and its dust is still awaiting the Resurrection morning; whereas the raising of those saints was a veritable resurrection like our Lord's. The second suggestion is that, though the sepulchres were opened by the earthquake, the inmates were not raised till after the Lord's Resurrection. But this is not the Evangelist's statement. He explicitly says in the first instance that they were raised when the sepulchres were opened. And what then? Here his language is ambiguous, since it may be construed either "and they came forth from the sepulchres after His raising, and entered into the Holy City" or "and

they came forth from the sepulchres, and after His raising entered into the Holy City." In the former case they lurked alive in their shattered sepulchres outside Jerusalem until He had been raised on the third day, when they emerged and entered the city; and in the latter they quitted the sepulchres immediately and concealed themselves elsewhere till the third day. In either case their resurrection preceded His, and He was not "the first-born from the dead."

What then must be said of those narratives, so in-harmonious and insusceptible of reasonable reconciliation? Realise the original situation. For a reason which will in due course appear, the Risen Lord's manifestations were vouchsafed "not to all the people but to chosen witnesses." And Ac. x. 41. conceive how these would be affected by an experience so unexpected, so transcendent. They would publish the fact that they had seen the Lord, but wonder and reverence would refrain their lips from enlarging upon a mystery so solemn to themselves and so incomprehensible to others. And naturally what little they divulged would be curiously canvassed by their hearers and would gather accretions in its passage from mouth to mouth.

And see what resulted by and by when the Evangelists wrote the story of our Lord's earthly life. In the apostolic tradition of His public ministry they had no lack of precious and authentic material; but it ended with the crucifixion, and what material was available when they came to tell the sequel? None of the three Synoptists belonged to the circle of the "chosen witnesses." For though it bears his name, our first Gospel was not written by the Apostle

Matthew. The Gospel which he actually wrote was an Aramaic "Book of Logia," a compilation of our Lord's sayings, which appeared probably early in the fifth decade of the first century; and our first Gospel is an amplification thereof by a later hand. None of our three Evangelists had witnessed the manifestations of the Risen Lord, and when they told the story, they had nothing to go upon but the common report. Here is the reason why their narratives are so brief, so vague, and so inharmonious; and valuable though they are as evidences of the fact so surely believed by the first generation, the men and women who had known the Lord in the days of His flesh, it is well for us that we have other testimonies more intimate and authoritative.

Cf. Lk. i. 1-4. The first we owe to the diligent researches of St. Luke. He had encountered two of the eye-witnesses, and he heard from their lips the precious narrative of their meeting with the Risen Lord at Emmaus. But better still and precious beyond all estimation is the full and moving narrative which the Beloved Disciple gave to the churches of Asia during his long ministry there and which, for the profit of after ages, he has written in the closing chapters of his peerless Gospel.

So surely was it believed, that when doubt arose in the primitive Church, it was never the Resurrection of our Lord that was called in question but the resurrection of believers—the blessed hope that He was "the first-fruits of those who have gone to rest," and as Jesus died and rose again, "so too those whom Jesus has laid to rest will God bring with Him"; and it will help us to a deeper faith in

the Resurrection of our Lord if we consider how St. Paul dealt with the question of the resurrection of believers when his converts at Corinth told him of their difficulties regarding it. "How," they inquired, "are the dead raised? And with what sort of body do they come?" I Cor.  
xv. 35.

It was a twofold problem, and they presented one side of it when they asked: "How are the dead raised?" When our mortal bodies are laid to rest, they do not lie there intact, awaiting the Resurrection morning. No sooner are they committed to the bosom of the earth than they experience the mysterious processes of Nature's alchemy. They decay; they crumble; they are resolved into their primal elements. Could we penetrate a grass-grown mound in God's Acre, would we find the lifeless form still reposing there "with meek hands folded on its breast"? No, it has disappeared. It has disappeared, but it has not perished. It has been transmuted. As the Egyptian puts it in *Quentin Durward*, it has "melted into the general mass of nature, to be recompounded in the other forms with which she daily supplies those which daily disappear, and return under different forms—the watery particles to streams and showers, the earthly parts to enrich their mother earth, the airy portions to wanton in the breeze, and those of fire to supply the blaze of Aldebaran and his brethren." And how then are the dead raised? How can the dispersed elements be regathered and recomposed? They belong to the common store of matter which remains constant, unincreased and undiminished, through all its transformations and adaptations; and the corporeal vestments which our souls wear now,



have clothed myriads before us, and would be theirs no less than ours at the Resurrection.

And suppose they could be restored to us then : are they suited for the Eternal Order ? They are material, and what place could they hold in a spiritual domain—that Kingdom which, as the Apostle allows, “flesh and blood cannot inherit” ? Shall we go thither, sneered the mocking pagans in early days, with hair on our heads and nails on our fingers ? It would be this sort of coarse gibe that was rankling in the mind of that Corinthian Christian when he inquired further : “If the dead are raised, with what sort of body do they come ?”

It was indeed a perplexing question, and he was no frivolous sceptic who propounded it but an earnest man who would fain believe but found faith very difficult ; and what is the Apostle's reply ? He points to the perpetual miracle of the seed and the harvest—truly a transcendent miracle though familiarity has dulled our perception of its mystery. Here is the natural law of the Resurrection. “Some one will say : ‘How are the dead raised ? And with what sort of body do they come ?’” “Unperceiving man !” cries the Apostle ; “open your eyes and see what is passing around you, and you will never ask that question or be troubled by that difficulty any more. For the resurrection of the body is no remote mystery ; it is an operation of the natural order, a familiar fact of daily experience. Look at the fields and see the seed cast into the ground and springing up in a rich and glorious harvest : there is the miracle of the Resurrection enacted before your eyes.” The seed dies, but it dies that it may live again and live

more abundantly. For death is not merely, in St. Bernard's phrase, "the gate of life"; it is the pathway to an ampler and nobler life.

But will this suffice? The harvest is no less material than the seed, and will the nobler body which will arise from the mortal body be less material or better fitted to inherit the Kingdom of God? Consider, argues the Apostle, what "body" is. It is a larger term than "flesh." There are indeed bodies of flesh, but even these are widely diverse. There is human flesh, and there is the flesh of beast and bird and fish. These are all different, yet they are all flesh. And they are all bodies, but they are not the only sorts of body. There are heavenly bodies as well as earthly bodies, and the heavenly bodies are not bodies of flesh. And moreover, like the earthly bodies, they are of different sorts: sun, moon, and stars have each a peculiar glory.

"Flesh" then and "body" are not synonymous terms; and while flesh cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, it in no wise follows that body cannot. And hence the Apostle carries forward his argument; and his thought in this magnificent passage is no mere devout fancy or philosophic speculation but a prophetic vision of a truth which physical science is at length in these days perceiving and investigating. He distinguishes between "natural" or rather "animal bodies" and "spiritual bodies." The former are bodies of flesh, and they are earthly and cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; but the latter are heavenly bodies, and they can. And furthermore there is a relation betwixt the two. The animal body is in truth the rough cast of the spiritual body. As one modern master has written, there is, "as it

were, a brain within the brain, a body within the body, something like that which the Orientals have for ages spoken of as the 'Astral Body.' " As there is a universal matter within matter—the "luminiferous ether," as we denominate it in our present ignorance—the medium through which the X-rays and wireless telegraphy operate, so there is a body within the body ; and in due season the scaffolding will be removed, "this muddy vesture of decay" will fall off, and the spiritual body will emerge, purged of its present grossness and fit to inherit the Kingdom of God. Meanwhile our bodies are only in the making. Science has traced their marvellous history—the patient evolution of the rude protoplasm into these complex organs of mind and soul. Even now they are still only in the making ; and the agelong process will at length attain its final goal when "the Saviour, the

Phil. iii. 21. Lord Jesus Christ, shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory." And this is the miracle of the Resurrection—the ultimate realisation of the Creator's eternal purpose, the "one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves."

Such was the glorious body which our Lord brought from the sepulchre and which He wears evermore at God's right hand. It was the body which He had worn in the days of His flesh, but it was transfigured even as ours shall one day be when "He  
Rom. viii. 11. who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will quicken even our mortal bodies through His Spirit  
1 Cor. xv. 53. who has His dwelling in us," and "this that is corruptible shall clothe itself with incorruption, and this that is mortal clothe itself with

immortality." It was an heavenly, a spiritual body, imperceptible by earthly, material sense; and here lies the reason why it was not to all the people but only to chosen witnesses that He was manifested after His Resurrection. According to Holy Scripture the Eternal World continually encompasses us, Heb. xii. 1, "unheard because our ears are dull, unseen <sup>22-24.</sup> because our eyes are dim"; and there are two ways whereby it may be discovered to us. One is that the eternal should be accommodated to our present limitations. And so it happened at the Incarnation when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory." The other way is that the miracle should be wrought upon us—that miracle which, incomprehensible by us meanwhile, St. Paul defines as "the enlightenment of the eyes <sup>Eph. i. 18</sup> of our heart," a temporary withdrawal of the <sup>R.V.</sup> veil of sense, "this muddy vesture of decay" which "doth grossly close us in." That was the manner of the heavenly manifestations which are recorded in the Old Testament. Remember, for example, what is written of Elisha—how the Syrians invested <sup>2 Ki. vi.</sup> Dothan by night, and early in the morning his <sup>13-17.</sup> servant went forth and, behold, an host encompassed the city with horses and chariots. "Alas, my master!" he cried, "how shall we do?" "And Elisha prayed, and said, 'Lord, open his eyes that he may see.' And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." That was the manner of revelations of old; and it was the manner of the manifestations of the Risen Lord. And therefore it is written that "when God raised Him on the

third day, He granted that He should become manifest, not to all the people, but to witnesses whom He had previously chosen."

And now with all this before our minds let us turn to the Evangelists' story.

After helping to lay the Lord's body in Joseph's sepulchre the three women returned to the city. The

Lk. xxiii. next day was the Sabbath, and after the  
56.

Jewish fashion they spent it in holy rest, comforting each other in their sorrow. All the while their hearts were with the dear Master where they had laid Him, and as soon as the Sabbath was over they set forth while it was yet dark and took their way to Mount Olivet, that in womanly tenderness they might visit His last resting-place and weep beside it

Cf. Jo. in loving and regretful remembrance. That  
xi. 31.

was all their errand. They had no thought of gazing at His dear dead face or paying any tribute of reverence to His lifeless clay. For they had seen the stone which closed the mouth of the cavern rolled into its place, and even if they would, they could not with their weak hands have stirred it. To their surprise they found on their arrival that it had been rolled away and the entrance to the sepulchre stood open. One explanation and only one occurred to them: the sepulchre had been visited by His enemies, and His sacred body had been removed and doubtless cast into the Valley of Hinnom; and they sped away to Peter and John and told them the distressful tidings. "They have taken the Lord out of the sepulchre," they cried, "and we know not where they have put Him!"

The two ran to see for themselves, and John, the

younger and more agile, outdistanced his comrade and got first to the sepulchre. It was indeed open, and he passed in. Picture the situation. It was no common tomb but a vault which after the manner of wealthy men Joseph had hewn out of the rock as his family burial-place ; and it is described in the Talmud how such a vault was constructed. In the floor along the walls cists (*kokhin*) were excavated, three to right and three to left and two at the far end, each four cubits long, seven deep, and six broad ; and in these the embalmed bodies were deposited side by side. The Lord's body was the first that had been deposited there. It had been laid in the cist nearest the entrance on the right hand ; and on entering the vault John peered down and in the dim light <sup>Mk. xvi. 5.</sup> made out to his surprise that the linen winding-sheet was lying flat. As he wondered, his comrade arrived, and with characteristic impetuosity he did not stay to wonder. Since the Lord's body was the first that had been laid in it, there was ample space in the broad cist, and Peter descended to explore it. He found that the body had indeed disappeared, and not only was the winding-sheet lying flat as though its content had evaporated, but the napkin <sup>Cf. Jo. xi. 44.</sup> which had encircled the Lord's head remained in its place, retaining its fold. He told John how things were, and the latter could not believe it until he too descended and saw it with his own eyes. What could it mean ? Neither of them guessed the wonderful truth ; " for," says the Evangelist in telling the story long afterwards, shamefastly confessing their dulness, " they knew not yet the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead."



Perplexed yet in so far relieved inasmuch as it was plainly no rude hand that had rifled the sepulchre, they quitted the vault and sought their fellows. Meanwhile Mary had returned alone and entered the vault, and now stood weeping by the empty cist. She did not descend into it, but she stooped and peered into it through her tears; and there at either end she beheld an angel. "Woman," they asked, "why are you weeping?" "They have taken away my Lord," she answered, "and I know not where they have put Him." Here something checked her—a look, perhaps, or a motion of the angels. She turned sharply round and beheld some one standing behind her. It was Jesus, but she did not recognise Him, not merely because within the vault the light was dim but because His aspect was so changed. "Woman," said He, "why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Her natural fancy was that He was the gardener and was challenging her for trespass. "Sir," she pleaded, looking back to the empty cist, "if it was you that carried Him off, tell me where you have put Him, and I will take Him away." "Miriam!" said He, lapsing, as Jews were wont in moods of tenderness, into the kindly mother-tongue and calling her by her Hebrew name with the loving accent which she had heard from no lips but His. That revealed Him. She wheeled round. "Rabboni!" she cried, "My honoured Master!" and would have flung herself at His feet and embraced them.

But He drew back. No more than Peter and John did she realise the wonderful truth. Her fancy was that by some happy chance He was not dead *after* all. Either He had merely swooned on the cross and

had recovered consciousness after being laid in the sepulchre, or else a miracle had been wrought on Him like that which He had wrought on Lazarus. In any case He was there before her alive, and she supposed that she would now resume the old sweet fellowship. And indeed He was alive, but the reality was more wonderful and blessed than she imagined. The former fellowship, so dear yet limited by the conditions of His incarnate state, was gone never to return ; but thenceforth, while she tarried on earth, she would have Him with her in spiritual presence, her Risen and Glorified Saviour, until at last she too would put off her mortal flesh and be clothed like Him with a spiritual body and share His eternal rest. And so, when she would have embraced Him, He drew back. " Be not clinging to Me " said He. It is the same word as Simon the Pharisee had used on that unforgotten evening when he was entertaining Jesus at his table and Mary, a penitent sinner, stole in and, crouching beside the couch where He reclined, anointed His feet and wept over them and wiped away the warm rain with her loose hair and kissed them. " If he were a prophet," exclaimed the horrified Pharisee, " he would have recognised who and what Lk. vii. 39. sort of woman this is who is clinging to him ! " The Lord had no rebuke for her then when she lavished upon Him the devotion of her grateful heart ; but now all was changed, and He would have her and her fellow-disciples realise it. " Be not clinging to Me," He said ; " for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to My brethren and say to them : ' I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.' "

She sought the disciples and told them her story, but they received it with pitying incredulity. They supposed that she was crazed with grief, and her story seemed to them mere "raving." So Lk. xxiv. 11. says St. Luke, and the word is one of "the beloved physician's" medical terms, signifying the delirium of a fevered brain.

So incredulous were they, so sure that all was over, that they thought only of returning to their homes and forgetting the fond hope which they had cherished ; and that afternoon two of them took their departure—not two of the Eleven but ordinary disciples. They belonged to Emmaus, a village between seven and eight miles south-west of Jerusalem ; and it is likely that they were brothers, since they lived together like Peter and Andrew at Bethsaida. One of them was named Cleopas, and probably it was he that afterwards told St. Luke the story. The other is anonymous, since the Evangelist never knew him and never heard his name.

As they travelled toward their village, they conversed of the morning's happenings, and they fell to hot debate. Is it not an evidence that Cleopas was St. Luke's informant that he makes no concealment of the ungracious part he played ? Like Thomas the Twin he was prone to despondency, and he stoutly disbelieved the story of Mary and the other women ; whereas his companion took a more hopeful view. Suddenly amid their altercation a stranger appeared beside them and accosted them. "What words are these," said he, "that you are bandying with each other as you walk ?" Ashamed of being thus caught, they halted and cast their eyes on

the ground. Then Cleopas retorted somewhat rudely: "Are you a solitary sojourner at Jerusalem that you have not learned what has happened there in these days?" "What is it?" asked the stranger. "All about Jesus the Nazarene, who proved a prophet right powerful in work and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how our Chief Priests and Rulers delivered Him to sentence of death and crucified Him. Our hope was that it was He that should redeem Israel; but for all that this is the third day since it all happened." "Yes," struck in the other. "but some women belonging to us astonished us. They went early in the morning to the sepulchre and did not find His body, and they came and said that they had seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And some of our company went off to the sepulchre and found it just as the women had said." "But," interposed Cleopas, "Him they did not see."

"Ah, you witless men," said the stranger, "and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into His glory?" Then he appealed to the Old Testament and, quoting passage after passage from the Law and the Prophets, showed how these had their fulfilment in the experience of their crucified Master. It was an undreamed-of illumination of those familiar scriptures, and they listened with kindling hearts. Though they travelled slowly, so slowly that the sun had sunk beneath the horizon ere they reached Emmaus, they were still greedy of further discourse. He would have passed on His way, but they would not hear of it. "Stay with us," they insisted. "It is toward evening, and

the day has now declined." Soon supper was spread, and to their surprise the stranger assumed the part of host and blessed the humble meal. Grace before meat was a Jewish custom, but His manner of performing the office was no custom. "He took the bread and blessed it and broke it and handed it to them." It was the manner of their Lord, and it revealed Him to them even as His tender accent when He called her by her name had revealed Him to Mary. "Their eyes were opened, and they recognised Him"; but ere they could greet Him, "He vanished away from their sight." He was not gone. He was with them still even as, according to His promise, He is with His people evermore; but the veil of sense, for a season withdrawn, re-enfolded them and hid Him from them.

They started up and hastened back to Jerusalem to tell the tale. There they found the disciples no longer dispirited and dispersed here and there but assembled, no doubt in that "upper room" which was thenceforth their meeting place—an apartment on the top storey of a poor tenement. It was a large gathering. The Eleven all save Thomas were there and with them the company of their fellow-believers; and though there was danger in their thus braving the rulers and they had the doors fast locked, there was gladness in their hearts. No sooner had Cleopas and his companion gained admission than they were greeted with a joyful announcement: "The Lord is really risen and has appeared to Simon!" What had transpired at this the recreant Apostle's first meeting with the Master is nowhere recorded, and surely the reason

Mt. xviii.  
20, xxviii.  
20.

Cf. Ac.  
i. 13.

Lk. xxiv.  
33.

Cf. 1 Cor.  
xv. 5.

is that he never divulged it. It was too sacred to be published abroad, and none but his trusted and sympathetic intimates would ever hear it from his lips. It was enough for the rest to know that "the Lord was really risen and had appeared to Simon," and they greeted the new-comers with the joyful tidings.

As soon as they obtained a hearing, the latter told their story; and presently a sudden hush fell on the exultant company. The doors were fast shut, and no one had knocked and been admitted; yet there stood Jesus in the midst. No wonder they were startled and fancied it was a spirit that

Lk. xxiv.

37.

they beheld, till He addressed to them the customary greeting: *shalom lakhem*, "Peace be unto you!" and granted them a sure token of His identity. He showed them His hands, and they saw the nail-prints; He bared His breast, and they saw where the spear had pierced His heart. And thus they were assured that it was indeed their Lord that they beheld, wearing evermore in His glorified body the memorials of His redeeming Passion.

Cf. Rev.

v. 6.

Their hearts leaped with gladness, and they would have compassed Him with tumultuous rejoicing. But He restrained them. It was not to stir idle emotion in their breasts that He had manifested Himself to them, but to remind them of the high service whereto He had called them ere His Passion and which they had forgotten amid its anguish. "Peace be unto you!" said He "As the Father has commissioned Me, I also send you." That was their calling—to win for Him the world which He had redeemed by His Infinite Sacrifice. They needed for its achievement that heavenly reinforcement which He had



promised in the Upper Room—the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate whom He would send them in His room ; and, symbolising this in oriental fashion, He breathed on them. “Receive,” said He, “the Holy Spirit.” And then He reiterated their commission. Twice already had He given it—  
 Mt. xvi.  
 19, xviii.  
 18. first to Peter when he made his great confession at Cæsarea Philippi, and then presently to all the Twelve when they had joined in that confession. And now He still further extends it and addresses it to all that company, ten of them Apostles and the rest ordinary disciples, charging them all and their successors in faith and devotion from generation to generation to proclaim His Gospel of mercy and of judgment.

Thomas was absent from that gathering. True to his character he regarded the story of Mary and the other women with disdainful incredulity, and sat alone, hugging his despair. His comrades sought him and reported what had happened in the Upper Room ; but he refused to believe it. He questioned whether it were really the Lord that they had seen ; and when they assured him that they had seen the scars on His hands and side, he remained incredulous. He required still surer evidence : he must not merely see the scars but put his finger “where the nails had been” and put his hand into His side. For a week he persisted in his unbelief ; nevertheless his curiosity had been aroused, and when they assembled next Sunday evening, he was there. Again the Lord appeared. “Peace be unto you !” said He ; and then He addressed Thomas. He showed him the wounds. “Bring your finger here,” said He : “see My hands ;

bring your hand, and put it into My side. And be done with your unbelief: believe." "My Lord!" cried Thomas, "my God!" and the Lord answered with a gentle rebuke: "Because you have seen Me, you have believed? Blessed are they who believed without seeing." It was a rebuke to them all for their slowness of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken and all that He had foretold them of His death and His rising again.

Here St. John ended his Gospel. There was indeed much more that he might have told; for more than that week elapsed ere the Lord bade His disciples His last farewell. For forty days after His Resurrection He tarried in their midst, manifesting Himself from time to time to chosen witnesses. Cf. Ac. i. 3. But surely they would shrink from speaking of those high hours of ineffable vision. Something indeed they must tell, especially in view of the vague and distorted reports which, as time passed, went abroad; and now that he has told what he deemed sufficient, the Beloved Disciple concludes his precious narrative. "There were many signs which Jesus made in the sight of His disciples besides those which are written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Thus his Gospel concluded, and thus it was first delivered to his churches in the Province of Asia; but presently he recognised the expediency of adding something more. As will duly appear, a notion had got abroad which was at once personally embarrassing and generally harmful; and to correct this he now resumes his pen and writes a supplementary chapter,

recounting yet another manifestation of the Risen Lord, the most solemn and memorable of all.

When His disciples were gathered with Him at the Supper on the eve of His arrest, after forewarning them of the imminent tragedy the Lord sought, as He had been wont at every premonition of His Passion, to carry their thoughts forward to the final triumph.

He assured them that He would rise again,  
Mt. xxvi. 32; Mk. xiv. 28. "and," He added, "after I am raised I will go before you to Galilee." At the moment

the promise was unintelligible to them; but after His Resurrection He repeated it. He would fain have a last meeting with the Eleven and once more as of old commune with them alone. There was no privacy in the busy capital, and—perhaps on that second Sunday evening—He appointed a meeting-place—

Cf. Mt. xxviii. 16. the uplands overlooking the Lake, whither He had in former days been wont to retreat with them from the clamorous multitude. Again He would commune with them as of old; and He bade them now travel north to the dear homeland and there await His appearing.

They betook themselves to Capernaum and waited there. The days passed, and still He did not appear. Meanwhile they had need of daily bread, and one evening when their store was spent, seven of them were together by the lakeside—Simon Peter, Thomas the Twin, Nathanael bar Talmi, James and John the sons of Zebedee, and two others. "I am off to fish" said Peter. "We are going with you" said the others; and launching their small boat, they put off to Peter's old smack lying at anchor and, boarding her, arranged their tackle and steered for the fishing ground.

Just as on that other memorable night three years ago their net was empty when they drew it, and in the early morning they returned disappointed to the anchorage. As they were mooring the smack some hundred yards off, they noticed a stranger on the beach, evidently, as they supposed, a merchant from Taricheæ waiting the arrival of the boats with their cargoes. They had none to sell, and they paid no heed till he hailed them: "Lads, have you any fish?" "No" they shouted back. And then he said: "Cast the net on the starboard side of the boat, and you will have a take." Fancying him a merchant skilled in fisher craft, they would suppose that from his vantage-ground on the beach he had descried the movement of a shoal; and they did as he directed. Immediately the net was full, so full that they could not draw it.

Just three years ago a like thing had happened on that very spot, and the truth flashed upon John. He turned to Peter. "It is the Lord!" he exclaimed. Peter had stripped to handle the net, and snatching up his seaman's jacket, a sleeveless tunic reaching to the knees, he put it on, flung himself overboard, and swam ashore. His less impetuous mates got into the small boat and rowed after him, towing the heavy net. On getting ashore they saw a charcoal fire laid ready and beside it a cake of bread and some dried fish—a scanty provision indeed for a hungry crew, yet graciously significant inasmuch as it not merely bespoke kindly regard for their need but reminded them of the barley cakes and the dried fishes wherewith the Master had once fed the multitude at Bethsaida Julias. If they had any doubt who it was that was standing there, this

Lk. v.  
1-11.

Cf. Jo. xxi.  
8 R.V.

Jo. vi. 9.

token would assure them. Ere communing with them He would fain calm their agitation and re-establish the old familiar intimacy ; and just as He would have done of old He bade them partake of the food which they so much required. The dried fish was insufficient, and He called for some of their catch. Peter, ever prompt, hastened to the small boat and, dragging the net high and dry, unladed it. It proved a huge haul, no fewer than a hundred and fifty-three large fish, and yet, as he and John remarked, the old net so long unused had stood the strain without a rent. When as many as were required had been dressed, "Come," said Jesus, "and breakfast"; and after His old fashion "He took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the dried fish." It was a re-enactment of the scene in the Upper Room on the night of His betrayal ; but there was one difference. Observe

Cf. Lk. xxiv. 39-43. how the Evangelist, tacitly correcting the crude popular notion, records merely that

He took the food and gave it to them. He did not share it. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God"; and His glorified body was no longer "flesh and blood," no longer "an animal body" needing material nourishment, but "a spiritual body."<sup>1</sup>

When the meal was finished and they were all at ease, He accosted Peter. "Simon son of John," said He, "Simon son of the Lord's grace," Jo. i. 42. a significant appellation which He had twice already employed—at Bethabara when He first

<sup>1</sup> Ac. x. 40, 41 should be rendered : "God gave Him to become manifest—not to all the people but to witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him (as His familiar companions in the days of His flesh)—after He rose from the dead."

met with Peter, a rude fisherman, and prophesied what grace would do for him, and again at Cæsarea Philippi when He hailed that great confession which justified His early trust. Here again He employs it, as though reminding the disciple who had played so ill a part that the grace which had blessed him at the first would still avail him. It was a kindly prelude, but what followed? "Simon son of John, have you more regard for Me than these?" It was a reminiscence of Peter's boast in the Upper Room so shamefully belied in the Chief Priest's courtyard that though all the others might forsake the Master, he never would; and it would be like a stab to the penitent's tender heart. "Yes, Lord," he replied, "you know that I *love* you." "Feed My lambs" was the answer. Presently the question was repeated: "Simon son of John, have you a regard for Me?" and Peter repeated his reply: "Yes, Lord, you know that I *love* you." "Be a shepherd to My poor sheep" said the Lord. A third time He put the question, accepting Peter's correction: "Simon son of John, do you *love* Me?" And now Peter was more grieved than ever; for it seemed as though the Lord were doubting not merely his regard but his love, and surely, whatever his defect in loyalty, his love was evident: was it not expressed at that moment in his every look and tone? "Lord," he cried, "you know everything: you perceive that I *love* you." "Feed My poor sheep" was the answer.

And in that answer, thrice variously given, lies the explanation of the Lord's seeming cruelty. He was not taunting Peter with his disloyalty and putting him



to shame before the others ; nor would the others so take Him. For had they not all, save John, played a worse part than Peter ? He had rallied from the panic in Gethsemane when they all forsook Him and fled, and had followed Him into the Chief Priest's courtyard. It was there that he had denied the Master ; and had they been there and been tried like him, what better would they have done ? In truth their disloyalty had been worse than his and merited a heavier reproach. But reproach was far from the Lord's thought. His purpose in recalling Peter's disloyalty was to show him and all the rest how they might make amends. He was leaving the multitude which had believed in Him in an evil world like " a crowd of frightened sheep." Here was the opportunity of the Eleven, the men whom He had chosen to be His helpers while He was with them and His witnesses after He was gone. How better could they atone for their disloyalty to Him than by caring for His flock, the sheep for which the Good Shepherd had laid down His life ?

The Lord did not stay to hear the impetuous vow of devotion which would leap to Peter's lips. " Verily, verily I tell you," He continued, " when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk where you would ; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and another will gird you and bear you where you will not." It was a prophecy of the martyrdom which crowned the long years of Peter's apostolic devotion. The story is that he was crucified at Rome in the year 67 on the same day when St. Paul was beheaded ; and here, in language which the disciples would easily understand, the Lord depicts

him stripped, outstretched on the scourging post, and driven to execution. Thus nobly he atoned in his chastened age for the disloyalty of his impulsive youth ; and thus generously did the Lord make amends for His seeming severity and exalt the humbled penitent in the eyes of his fellows.

And He vouchsafed yet another token of Peter's restoration. He and the sons of Zebedee had been the Master's special intimates ; and even as of old He had required their companionship in His seasons of privacy, so now He would commune with Peter and John apart. "Follow Me" said He to the former. Instinctively Peter turned to his old comrade, and seeing that he too had risen to attend the Master, he wondered what would be the issue of the fellowship thus happily resumed. Comrades in life, would they be comrades in death, or was there some gentler fate in store for the disciple whom Jesus loved ? "Lord," said he, "and what of him ?"

Cf. Mt.  
xvii. 1 ;  
Mk. ix. 2 ;  
Lk. ix. 28.  
Mt. xxvi.  
37 ; Mk.  
xiv. 33.

However natural, it was an idle question. Surely he should have been content with the assurance that he would so nobly atone for his disloyalty ; and the Lord gently reproved him. "If," said He, "it be My will that he remain until I come, what is it to you ? You follow Me." And therewith He led the way. Peter would understand, and so did John ; but when the story got abroad, it was mischievously misconstrued. It was taken to mean that the Beloved Disciple would never die but would survive until the Lord's Second Advent ; and despite His frequent admonitions that the progress of His Kingdom would be gradual, the idea arose that He would return

within the lifetime of that generation. It was a vain expectation ; and as the years passed and still He Cf. 2 Pet. iii. 4. did not appear, those who entertained it were sorely troubled. At length all that generation which had seen the Lord had passed away except the disciple whom He had loved ; and quoting the promise that he would remain until the Lord's return, they eagerly anticipated its immediate fulfilment. The fond illusion reached the ears of the aged Apostle ; and here he corrects it, pointing out what the Lord had really meant. " Jesus did not say that he was not to die, but ' If it be My will that he remain until I come, what is it to you ? ' "

It was to correct that mischievous misconception that St. John added this chapter to his Gospel. Else he would never have published the story of this peculiarly solemn manifestation of the Risen Lord ; and he published only so much as the occasion required. He told how it came to pass that the Lord spoke that word, and what it really signified ; and he told nothing more—nothing of the converse which He held with him and Peter when He had led them apart, perhaps to His accustomed retreat on the hillside, or of the further manifestations which He surely vouchsafed to the Eleven during their sojourn in Galilee.

Only this further is recorded. Their sojourn there was their farewell to the dear homeland. Jerusalem was the starting-point of their new career, and thither they betook themselves to await His final charges. It was forty days after the Resurrection and they were assembled in their upper room when He appeared

in their midst and conducted them forth to Bethany—not the village but the western slope of Mount Olivet which, as we have seen, bore that designation and which included within its circuit the Garden of Gethsemane. It was surely thither that He conducted them ; and it is instructive to consider that on the way thither they passed along the streets of the city, crossed the Kidron, and ascended the slope of the mountain. They would encounter a multitude of passers-by, yet none perceived Him. They saw the Eleven, but the veil of sense hid Him from their sight. They saw the Eleven, but they had no vision of the Heavenly Companion who walked in their midst.

The disciples had been communing together, and they had much to ask Him when they reached the familiar retreat hallowed by so many moving memories. It evinces how greatly they needed the enlightenment of the promised Advocate that they still clung to their Jewish ideal of the Messianic Kingdom ; and they asked Him : “ Lord, is this the time when you restore the Kingdom to Israel ? ” “ It is not for you,” He answered, “ to learn times and seasons which the Father has set in His own authority.” And He told them further that this and every other perplexity would be resolved when they received the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Then He bade them farewell. “ He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass that as He was blessing them He parted from them : a cloud stole Him away from their eyes.” The veil of sense closed about them, and He was no longer visible. But He was not gone. He was still with them in

spiritual presence ; and even so He is with His people evermore. He is with us now ; and were our eyes opened, we would see Him.

“ Jesus, these eyes have never seen  
That radiant form of Thine ;  
The veil of sense hangs dark between  
Thy blessed face and mine.

“ When death these mortal eyes shall seal,  
And still this throbbing heart,  
The rending veil shall Thee reveal  
All glorious as Thou art.”

## THE SIGHS OF ST. ALOYSIUS

*From the Latin*

O CHRIST, Love's Victim, hanging high  
Upon the cruel Tree,  
What worthy recompense can I  
Make, mine own Christ, to Thee ?

All my life's blood if I should spill  
A thousand times for Thee,  
Ah ! 'twere too small a quittance still  
For all Thy love to me.

My sweat and labour from this day,  
My sole life, let it be,  
To love Thee aye the best I may  
And die for love of Thee.





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